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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 26 November 2015

Jeudi 26 novembre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 novembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2015, on the motion for allocation of time on the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in this House and to speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane, the residents of my colleagues from the NDP caucus and, I'm sure, some other residents of Ontario. But today it's not a pleasure, because we're discussing the time allocation of Bill 144.

There are those who think that time allocation would be a good thing because, you know, in general, politicians talk too much anyway.

Interjection: Especially those from the north.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thanks for that.

This is a much more serious issue, because the way our democracy is constructed—it has taken hundreds of years to do this—a government is elected, and a government, especially a majority government, has every right to put forward legislation. But in return, the opposition should have the right to criticize, to critique, to debate and try to make that legislation better. The government has every right to put forward legislation, and there is a time-honoured tradition how that is done. It has taken hundreds of years to develop this. It has had a few problems over the years, but generally that's how it is done.

In years past, one of few tools the opposition had, in a majority government situation, would be to extend debate. One of the reasons that I think time allocation—all parties have been guilty of this; this isn't a partisan thing. The time allocation tool that's being used is something that all the parties have used, and it has hurt democracy each time.

But with this one, it's not only a large bill, but there are issues in this bill. It's basically a budget bill, and on a regular budget bill, you have to at least extend the debate over 12 days. This is basically the same as a budget bill.

It has schedules in it that affect people throughout the province in every walk of life, and yet this debate is being cut off.

I'm the whip for the party. It's my job to make sure that everyone who wants to speak to a bill can get on the schedule and express the concerns of their constituents, because the way it works when you're elected is that you talk to your constituents and you talk to your stakeholders. When legislation comes on to the order paper, and usually this is a longer process, you know who will be affected, you go back and you talk to them, and you say, "Well, what are the issues you want me to bring back to the Legislature so I can talk on your behalf and bring forward your concerns and hopefully ensure your concerns are reflected in the legislation?" That is how it's supposed to work.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Not here.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, not here, and specifically not today, because in my caucus of 20, I have had three members who have had the ability to speak, only three. I can safely say that all 20 want to speak—because every one of them has constituents who are deeply impacted by the schedules of this bill. But the government has taken it upon themselves to time-allocate it to basically stop not only the members from speaking on behalf of their constituents, but they've also time-allocated the committee time. Often we hear from the government benches in their remarks, "Well, you know what? We need to get this bill through and then we'll get it to committee, and we can make the changes needed in committee."

Well, I'd like to do the search on actually how many opposition amendments get passed in committee; but in this case, they're even time-allocating the committee time on a budget bill. It's sad, actually. Time allocation is a tool. It's a tool I personally don't agree with, that our party doesn't agree with but admittedly, when we were in government, have used. But if you think of a tool as a hammer, time allocation should be used a little like a claw hammer that you use to build a desk. This government is using it like a sledgehammer to tear down our democracy, and there is a difference.

Usually a bill will come on the order paper. We've had bills on the order paper for—well, the trails act has been on the order paper for a long, long, long time. I have people in my riding asking me about the trails act and when it's going to come forward. But usually something comes on the order paper and you have time to look at it and, like I said, talk to your constituents, and this is a process of months. After six and a half hours of debate, the government can move closure, but this is a much

longer process. Usually, the bill has been on the order paper for a long time.

With this bill, the bill was put on the order paper and the boxes were still warm when the government put forward the time allocation motion. This is the most egregious use of time allocation that I have seen in my four years here. They've time-allocated not only—even the introduction of the bill. This isn't a bill about one widget or fixing one thing; this is a bill that is going to change how many parts of this province are run. It's got big, big changes for labour and huge changes also for the electricity system—the sale of Hydro One and where the money is going. Guess what, folks? It's in this bill. And how the money is going to be spent: Guess what, folks? It's in this bill.

What they're doing is, basically, within a week they are just shoving it through. The question, the big question, is why? When you are in any kind of negotiation—and basically the democratic system, our parliamentary system, is a type of negotiation. When you're in a negotiation and someone on the other side does something that just doesn't make sense for who they are representing—because the government is elected to represent the people of Ontario. It is the government of Ontario. What they are doing here doesn't make sense for the people of Ontario. You have to ask yourself why.

0910

There could be some plausible reason. It could be that the session is coming to an end and the government basically didn't know how to manage the session, so they're having to ram this through in the last couple of weeks. Is that a plausible reason? I don't know; I'm not in the halls on the other side. But we have a lot of contact with some of the staff on the government side, and they are very competent people. We have a very good relationship with them. When you're on the House leaders' and whips' team, you do a lot with the other parties. I don't think it's a lack of competence on the other side, not at all; not with the people we deal with. I'm happy to say they are very competent.

Another plausible reason, and I hate to even bring this up, is that someone on the other side, whoever controls this, is basically too lazy to worry about democracy. This is a tool you can use with impunity. The only impunity is pressure from the public. I don't believe that either.

The third thing it might be is that there are actually parts of this bill that the government really doesn't want people to talk about and this is actually an effort to hide the true impact of some of these things from the public. The time from when this bill was put on the order paper to the time that it's going to be through the House, I think, is unprecedented. We have had no time. We've called our stakeholders. They didn't know anything about these changes, and already the bill was in time allocation. The government can say, "We've consulted all these people." Really? Well, they haven't given the opposition any time to consult anyone, and that is a huge, huge issue.

There could a fourth—am I on three or four or five?

Interjection: Three.

Mr. John Vanthof: There is a fourth thing this could be, and this is probably more dangerous: This government is so ideological that they think that everything they do shouldn't be questioned. That is extremely dangerous. And quite frankly, it's extremely disappointing, because this government was duly elected that they were going to be progressive; they were going to be open; they were going to be transparent. Do you remember—this will come back again—that they were so transparent that they were going to release the mandate letters from the Premier to the ministers? That's how transparent—never been done before. It's being done again federally. That was their demonstration: "We're releasing more information than any other government has done. We're flooding you with information." But at the same time they're doing that, they are ramming legislation through this House that is going to make a huge difference to Ontario, and they're basically not allowing the people to have any comment time on it. That is a danger to our democracy.

This isn't the first time it has happened. Someone will scratch their head a couple of years from now: "When did this actually—who approved this?" That has happened before with a government like the one on the other side. Take the Green Energy Act. We voted for the ideal of the Green Energy Act, but it was rammed through so quickly that there are things in the Green Energy Act that are extremely egregious.

In my riding, contractors lost hundreds of thousands of dollars specifically because of problems with the way the Green Energy Act was written. Solar farms are going up all over farmland in Ontario because of the Green Energy Act. Then the government says, "Oh, this doesn't look like a good idea. Maybe we should have thought this through." So now it is not allowed on class 1, class 2 and class 3 farmland. But farmland in northern Ontario isn't classified. So, guess what? On one hand, the government says farming in Ontario is going to be one of the growth centres of the economy of Ontario. It very well could be; there is lots of potential there. But on the other hand, the best farmland in northern Ontario, as we speak, is being covered with solar farms by this very government. Why? Because they didn't take the time to actually look at the legislation they were passing, because they are always right.

They are ideologues. This legislation is going to have exactly the same impact. Are there good things in this legislation? Likely some. Are there some very bad things in this legislation—dangerous? Yes, there are. And the very fact that they are pushing this through so quickly is the proof.

I know that in my farm and in my business and everything, when I do something really well—I'm a pretty humble guy, but if I do something really well, I like people to see it. If I do a nice job painting the barn, I like it when people drive by our barn and say it. I don't try and hide it. And yet, here, they are hiding it. They're pushing it through so quickly, hoping—it is a very complicated bill. This Trillium Trust stuff, where the Hydro One money is supposed to go—this is very, very

complicated, and they are trying to get it through without anyone actually noticing it. That is not the way our democracy is supposed to work.

We are very, very disappointed in the Premier, who promised to be open and transparent and is proving to be anything but. This Hydro One sale and the way the money is going to be handled through this document is a defining moment in her career, and it certainly won't be a very good defining moment because when you try and thwart democracy, it is never a good thing for the people of Ontario, and we are all here to represent the people. In this case, by time-allocating this bill, the Premier and her government—they certainly aren't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm going to try to loop back and do a little bit of, "Here is what the opposition does when governments present bills." This is a time allocation motion that we're debating. What is a time allocation motion? Basically, a time allocation motion is setting out that we are finishing debate on a particular piece of legislation. In this case, it's Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes. I want to loop back to "implement budget measures," because that's an important part of this discussion.

Bill 144 was introduced as legislation last Thursday. It has been on the docket, shall we say, for seven days. It was introduced on Thursday afternoon at approximately 1 p.m. We don't get a copy of Bill 144 until it is bound—printed. That happens the following day. Well, of course, Fridays we don't sit in the Ontario Legislature, so the first bound copies arrived in our offices on Monday. That would be three days ago.

On Monday, we started debating Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act. As opposition members, when we get government legislation, part of our role is to reach out to the individuals, the organizations and the stakeholders who will be impacted or potentially impacted because, of course, Monday was the first opportunity for us to physically look at it and figure out what it covers.

Bill 144, the Budget Measures Act, has 23 schedules. Schedules generally will mean impacting other pieces of legislation: opening them up and modifying them. Bill 144 has 23: the Assessment Act, the City of Toronto Act, the Electricity Act, the Escheats Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, the Forfeited Corporate Property Act, the Government Advertising Act, the Horse Racing Licence Act—I could go on for the 23, but I think you get the point, Speaker. There are a number of pieces of legislation that are being opened up and impacted as a result of Bill 144.

0920

So then what we would do, in opposition, is reach out. We would reach out to the city of Toronto. We would reach out to the organizations like the children's treatment centres that are referenced in schedule 1 of the assessment, and we would say, "What do you think of this? What are the impacts on the ground? Is this going to help your organization or is this going to hurt it? Is this

going to help your municipality or is it going to hurt it?" That's what we do in opposition. So by the very fact that within the same seven-day period we are actually talking about time allocation and shutting down the debate on Bill 144, you have eliminated our opportunity to reach out to our constituents and to reach out to our stakeholders. It speaks to the lack of regard that the government of the day is showing for the opposition's role and what we are here to do.

I mentioned that implementing budget measures is a very important part of what I want to talk about. We have debated Bill 144, collectively, all three parties, for less than six and a half hours—so, for ease of math, six and a half hours. If you look at the standing orders—and I know a lot of us don't enjoy reading the standing orders; maybe more of us should do it. On page 32 of the standing orders, it actually references budget motions and votes and debates related to budget options, and it says "eight hours." Eight hours is what we have to do. So we could make a pretty good argument that a bill entitled An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes is in fact a budget motion. We're not even getting the 12 hours that by our standing orders, by our parliamentary precedents, we would be afforded as parliamentarians in debate. The Liberals have spoken on why they need this time allocation motion for less than 10 minutes. It begs the question: What is the rush? What is the motivation for putting together 167 pages of budgetary motions and legislative changes and then only giving us six and a half hours to debate it?

As my colleague from the third party mentioned, we also are limiting the public part of the consultation. If you read the motion that was brought forward by the House leader, each witness—"witness" is code for "each member of the public who is interested in Bill 144"—will get all of five minutes to drive down to Toronto and talk about what they like or don't like and amendments they want for Bill 144. I think it's a real shame that we are suggesting that public members have five minutes and that that's the maximum amount of interest that we will give them.

So in that manner, I would like to suggest an amendment to the motion for the time allocation on Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes. It reads:

I move that the paragraph starting "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet" be struck out and replaced with:

"That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 2, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Thursday, December 3, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

"That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 144:

"—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

“That the deadline for requests to appear be 4 p.m. on Tuesday, December 1, 2015; and

“That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

“That each witness will receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

“That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, December 3, 2015; and

“That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Friday, December 4, 2015.”

I will give that to you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Jones has moved the following amendment:

“I move that the paragraph starting ‘That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet’ be struck out and replaced with:

“‘That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs’”—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Dispense. Agreed?

Interjections: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): “‘That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 2, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Thursday, December 3, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

“‘That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 144:

“‘Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly’s website and Canada NewsWire; and

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“‘That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

“‘That each witness will receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

“‘That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, December 3, 2015; and

“‘That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Friday, December 4, 2015.’”

Further debate on the amendment?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: All I have done with that—let’s call it a friendly amendment—is to double the time from five minutes for public deputations to 10. I think it’s a reasonable request. Please support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 44.

Ms. Jones has moved the following amendment:

“I move that paragraph starting ‘That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet’ be struck out and replaced with:

“‘That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 2, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Thursday, December 3, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

“‘That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 144:

“‘Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly’s website and Canada NewsWire; and

“‘That the deadline for requests to appear be 4 p.m. on Tuesday, December 1, 2015; and

“‘That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

“‘That each witness will receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

“‘That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, December 3, 2015; and

“‘That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Friday, December 4, 2015.’”

0930

Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry?

All those in favour of the amendment, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the amendment will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote will be deferred until after question period.

Vote deferred.

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER PROTECTION AND ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR RENFORCER LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA SURVEILLANCE DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr. Delaney, on behalf of Mr. Chiarelli, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m just going to spend a few minutes here at third reading to cover the provisions of Bill 112 and explain some of the benefits of it. This is a bill that’s aimed at strengthening and enhancing the capabil-

ities of the Ontario Energy Board to further protect electricity ratepayers by boosting consumer protection and improving the ability to ensure the continuity of service.

One of the important things that Bill 112 does is to propose legislative enhancements to the Ontario Energy Board Act, which I'll call the OEBA, and the Energy Consumer Protection Act. These enhancements include some very key elements that consumers have been asking for and that very clearly showed up as being needed. I think the most important one is increasing consumer protection by amending the Energy Consumer Protection Act to include the banning of door-to-door energy sales.

As well, Bill 112 improves consumer advocacy through processes that give consumers a direct voice in Ontario Energy Board proceedings, including enabling cabinet to set requirements. Another thing that Bill 112 does is to reinforce the Ontario Energy Board's ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service to all consumers in Ontario in the event of a failing transmitter or distributor. Bill 112 also enhances the Ontario Energy Board's ability to levy penalties for non-compliant activities. It strengthens the Ontario Energy Board's oversight of utility transactions and structures. It lends clarity to relationships among local distribution companies and their affiliates, and it provides tools to cabinet to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure gets built.

The focus of this is and always has been putting energy consumers first. The legislation strengthens and enhances the Ontario Energy Board's role, as I've just described, and ensures that it has a robust series of measures and procedures in order to regulate the energy sector effectively and to provide consumer protection.

If passed, these changes would provide the Ontario Energy Board with stronger compliance and enforcement powers by increasing the penalties that could be levied against companies that are not complying with the OEB's legislation, rules and directions. In short, if the Ontario Energy Board makes a ruling, we need that ruling to have teeth. It enhances the ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service if distribution or transmission companies are unable to fulfill their licence obligations. Bill 112 enhances oversight to ensure best practices on utility consolidation activities. I think the most important thing to continue to repeat on utility or local distribution company consolidation is that they are going to be love marriages among willing participants.

If passed, this legislation would enable the Ontario Energy Board to give consumers a stronger voice in Ontario Energy Board hearings and proceedings. If passed, Bill 112 would enhance consumer protection for those who sign energy retail contracts by doubling the cooling-off period to 20 days from 10 days and requiring that all contracts are subject to a verification process. In other words, when you sign up for something on the Internet or you want to make a material change, there's a little pop-up box that says, "Are you sure you want to do this?" That's the only change that this is making: It's going to make sure that consumers get that second chance—to say, "Are you sure that this is what you want to do?"

Once enacted, Bill 112 will enable the province to do something that consumers have been requesting for a long time. If passed, this legislation will ban door-to-door sales of retail electricity and gas contracts.

The proposed legislation will also enable the province to identify priority transmission projects in order to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure actually gets built in a timely manner.

Let's go into a few more of the details in the few minutes that I have left. The proposed Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act also includes changes to the Energy Consumer Protection Act, which was passed in 2010. This would, as I mentioned earlier, prohibit electricity retailers and gas marketers from selling energy retail contracts at the consumer's home while still allowing retailers and marketers to engage in advertising activities at the door. In other words, you can hand people information but you can't close the deal at the door.

The ministry and the Ontario Energy Board are also proposing to more strictly govern door-to-door marketing activity. As members of the Legislature, we have, I'm sure, all had hands-on experience with this, where—normally at dinner time, it seems, in our neighbourhood—somebody rings the doorbell and you go to the door and there's somebody who has got a plastic laminated tag. I've looked at a few of them and I've thought to myself, "Boy, that looks suspiciously like it could be either Enersource or Ontario Power Generation or something like it," including a few who've actually had tags that say that they are with Ontario Hydro, which is an entity that hasn't existed in some 15 years.

I would listen to some of the spiels, some of which would say, "And the government is forcing us to do this." There were a few of them that I would say, "Really? I'm the government. Tell me how it is that I'm forcing you to do this." And then a lot of them would start hemming and hawing. On a few of them, I said, "I'll tell you what. Let me call the Peel Regional Police. You just stay right here. Let's wait until the police come," and—boom! most of them are gone.

So it's this stuff that's on the fringe of what's actually legal and certainly over the line in what's ethical that this act aims to stamp out once and for all. By banning sales at a consumer's home, this legislation would protect consumers from very aggressive sales tactics in which people come in and say, "Can I see your gas bill? Can I see your electric bill?" As speaker after speaker, on all sides, has said to Ontarians, "If somebody comes to the door and asks you to produce your gas bill or your electricity bill, close the door; send them packing. End the transaction right there. You know for sure that you are being had."

This would also allow for a more considered decision-making process prior to signing up for an energy contract. There were a lot of people who said, "Just ban the entire thing." Ontario has not gone that far, but what the province has said is that they can't come to the door, engage in a high-pressure scheme, have you produce your

bill, copy down the measures from your bill and then suddenly a month or two later you find that you've been signed up to a contract that you aren't sure whether or not you agreed to. That's done; that's not going to happen anymore, and if you find that it does, you're going to have measures to get out of it.

There are also a number of other proposed amendments to enhance consumer protection. For example, stricter parameters are being proposed around contract verification. You've got to make sure that you are saying yes, after the person has left, to what the contract actually is, not what they were trying to make you believe that it is. Currently, only contracts signed in person are subject to a verification process—as if there's no fraud on the Internet. Proposed enhancements would ensure that all contracts, including Internet contracts, are subject to the same process. There are also proposed amendments to extend the cooling-off period during which consumers can cancel an energy contract without penalty, moving it from 10 days after the fact to 20 days after the fact.

0940

As well, the legislation includes proposed changes to the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, which would provide the Ontario Energy Board with the ability to levy higher and more flexible penalties for contravention of its rules and legislation. What this means is that some of the companies that have people come to your door with this type of high-pressure sales tactic can say, "Well, you know, so let's do it. What are they going to do: give us a tap on the wrist? Then we just change all those phony-balance tags our people are wearing and give them a different-coloured vest that still looks something like it and send them out again." No. This time it has got teeth. This time it gives the Ontario Energy Board the ability to say, "And we mean it."

The legislation advocates strongly for consumers by proposing legislative enhancements that would allow the Ontario Energy Board to establish measures to enhance the current representation of the interests of consumers in OEB proceedings. This would provide additional opportunities for consumers to make a representation before the Ontario Energy Board.

Currently, the legislation restricts the business activities of affiliates of municipally owned local distribution companies—for those of you who come from where I come from, this means Enersource—but it doesn't include any such restrictions on the business activities of non-municipally-owned local distribution companies. Proposed enhancements would remove the restrictions on the business activities for affiliates of municipally owned local distribution companies, putting them on the same footing as privately or provincially owned local distribution companies. In layman's terms, we want a level playing field and a fair and equitable set of rules; that's what this bill proposes.

Currently, legislation provides the Ontario Energy Board with powers to ensure that continuity of service for distribution company customers would carry on in the event of an emergency. Under the proposed legislative

enhancements, these powers would also be extended to transmission companies. In addition, some enhanced powers to help head off a potential emergency have also been introduced—again, some experience with what is happening in other jurisdictions and what we can very clearly see by being able to look at some of our experience here in Ontario.

The current legislation requires the Ontario Energy Board to examine a transaction that allows someone to gain more than 20% control of the voting securities of a transmitter or distributor. The proposed legislative enhancements reduce this to 10% to account for more widely held ownership anticipated in the future. In addition, the proposed legislative amendments would require that distributors maintain their head offices and records here in Ontario.

Currently, if a transmission project is identified as a priority project in the long-term energy plan as approved by cabinet, the Ontario Energy Board must re-evaluate the need for these projects when they apply for approval from the board, which is repetitive. The proposed enhancements would provide cabinet with the clear authority to identify priority transmission projects and eliminate the need for the Ontario Energy Board to spend further time on the basic principle of need. All other elements of the Ontario Energy Board's existing approval processes, including reviewing costs for prudence and allocation, would, however, remain in place. This measure would help to reduce the duplication of work between the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Energy Board in moving forward in building key transmission infrastructure here in Ontario. In other words, once the work is done by one party, it's deemed to be done by the other party.

A few final remarks: The protection of Ontario's energy consumers remains the top priority of this bill. Energy consumers are better protected today than they were five years ago before the Energy Consumer Protection Act came into effect. Since the Energy Consumer Protection Act's implementation in 2011, the number of complaints against retailers has decreased significantly. In other words, the act has some teeth. We're making those teeth sharper and more numerous and more effective, and we know we're building on a track record of success from legislation five years ago.

As part of Ontario's commitment to protect electricity ratepayers, last year, in 2014, the Ministry of Energy asked the Ontario Energy Board to review the Energy Consumer Protection Act and to report back with any recommendations about opportunities to strengthen consumer protection.

Minister Chiarelli underlined the government's commitment to doing all that it can to protect Ontario energy consumers in light of an evolving retail energy sector, and that's what this bill does. That's why we hope this bill will gain speedy passage through the Legislature and be enacted: so that it can get to work, continuing to more effectively and comprehensively protect Ontario energy consumers now and into the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity, on third reading, to speak to Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

We're in third reading now on this bill. One of the things the bill does is ban door-to-door sales of electricity and energy contracts. That's certainly something that our party supports and that I support. I think most people don't appreciate having people knock on their door to try to sell them something when they're just trying to get on with whatever it is—cooking dinner or enjoying Saturday. Too often, vulnerable people especially are open to high-pressure tactics and end up in contracts that they don't understand or they don't want or they really didn't get all the information about. This bill would ban door-to-door sales, and certainly I support that.

Where I live, out in Vankoughnet, in rural Muskoka—it's half an hour from the closest town—door-to-door sales really aren't a big issue; I've got to say that. Our driveway has a pretty good hill, and in the 10 years that we've lived there, I can't say as we've actually ever had a door-to-door salesperson come to the door.

In fact, we've hardly had any kids come on Halloween. This year, my wife and I were shopping on October 31, and I raised the question, "Should we get some candy?" My wife said, "No one ever comes to our door," so we didn't, to make a long story short. To our surprise, on Halloween night, we actually got one visitor, and then of course we had to scrounge to have anything to give to that person. Next year, we'll be better prepared for that.

The other group that probably spends more time going door to door is politicians. Usually, we're trying to sell something, but we're not trying to sell something that would cost you money, necessarily—although, in the case of this Liberal government, it usually does end up costing you a lot of money; you just don't pay it directly. But I absolutely have no problem with banning door-to-door sales.

Some other aspects of this bill—I think maybe the member from Mississauga—Streetsville had a speech for the original second reading. He hadn't revised it since committee, perhaps, because I believe I heard—maybe one of the government members can correct me. I know we had a number of amendments at committee, and one of them was to make the cooling-off period 10 days instead of 20, and that was passed. That was the one amendment that was passed. If the member looks at the most current version of the bill, he might note that the 20-day period is stroked out. Where it says, "Subsections 15(4) and 19(1) are amended in order to mandate a cooling-off period of 20 days," it is in fact stroked out. Maybe I didn't hear him correctly.

That's the one amendment that has passed. We did make a number of other suggestions that I think were quite logical. Unfortunately, the government defeated all of our other amendments, like allowing online verification or allowing commission payments. Those were defeated.

The ban on online verification: I think it's quite cumbersome, the process they've come up with that requires

a phone call. Even though you may absolutely want to buy something—it's your choice—you still have to make a phone call afterwards and verify. If you raise any questions, then the process is immediately halted; it's put on hold. If, for example, a wary consumer asked about the global adjustment charge, which most people don't understand, then the process would be stopped. So I do see problems with that.

0950

I also see problems with the ban on commissions. Commissions are a very, very typical part of the sales process. I have two brothers that are in the car business: my brother Larry, who has the Ford dealership in Bracebridge, Cavalcade Ford; and my brother Ross, who has Muskoka Chrysler, located quite close by to Cavalcade Ford. Obviously, commission sales are just part of the car business. It's a way of motivating people. If all the salespeople were paid the same regardless of how many cars or vehicles they sold, it just wouldn't be as efficient and effective.

Where I do have a problem with commissions is when the government starts handing out huge commissions for the Pan Am Games; that's a place where they're perhaps inappropriate. But I think that just to ban commission sales in the energy sector completely is a little heavy-handed, to say the least.

We're talking in this bill a lot about the powers of the Ontario Energy Board, and I just mentioned the question that might be raised about the global adjustment. The issue in my riding, the number one issue in Parry Sound—Muskoka that, if you have to pick one—and there is, of course, a huge variety, but the one that comes up most in my constituency offices in Parry Sound and in Bracebridge, with emails and calls and people showing up looking for help, is affordability of electricity.

That is why the question about the global adjustment would be such a good one when you phone up to verify the contract you've signed, because most people aren't aware that the actions of the government, through the Green Energy Act, have resulted in huge overpayments of the market price of electricity. As the Auditor General pointed out, between 2006 and 2015, it's some \$50 billion—that's with a B; billion dollars. Most people just don't realize that. And that's what is a huge part of the increase—the great increase—in electricity bills we've seen.

I reviewed our critic's speech back in September on this bill. He was talking about what's going to happen on November 1. Is there going to be a rollback? Is the OEB going to roll back energy prices at that point? Well, we saw what happened on November 1, and that was another 8% increase in electricity cost. I believe it's now 17 cents a kilowatt hour at peak hours. People in Parry Sound—Muskoka, especially those who are the least well off, who tend to have homes with electric baseboard heat—a lot of them heat with wood out of necessity, as well, or because they like it, but increasingly out of necessity—just can't afford to pay their hydro bills. We're getting people showing up in my constituency office who are, in

many cases, being cut off; they're being shut down. Something's happened—they've lost a job or they've injured themselves. We've had cases where people have been in hospital, and they come back from hospital and their power is being shut off. It's a reality. That's the worst thing about energy policies in this province: affordability is really hurting the average person, particularly in a riding like Parry Sound—Muskoka.

The government spins that it's the Ontario Energy Board that sets the prices, but it's the policies of the government that affect the costs in the whole sector, that determine what those prices would be. The biggest factor in driving up electricity prices is that \$7-billion-a-year global adjustment. It's a huge part of it, and that's directly a result of the Green Energy Act, a policy decision of this government.

That is a huge, huge factor in my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, and it's affecting not just the person trying to pay their bill, but also jobs. Energy costs are just one of the basic costs of doing business in this province. Last week, I was in Parry Sound and I stopped in for lunch at Orr's Fine Meats, or Orr meats. There's a deli there as well. Murray Orr was there. What did he want to talk about? He wanted to talk about how much his energy bill has gone up. They have to run the coolers, the freezers and all the refrigeration. They can't decide to shut it off in peak times; they've got to run it all the time when they need cooling. So they've had a huge, huge increase in their energy bills. It makes it challenging for a business like that, and it makes it challenging for big businesses. The biggest example in northern Ontario—we've seen that Xstrata Nickel, a few years ago, left Timmins and moved just across the border to Quebec, to a dirtier smelter, and 700 jobs left the province—700 jobs.

Future mines: The government has talked a lot about the Ring of Fire now for ages, without a lot to show for it. They thought they had a deal with Cliffs resources before they left the province, and part of that deal was a huge energy subsidy. You have to do that, because there's just not going to be mines opening in this province if they have to pay the full price of electricity. The chromite smelter that Cliffs was going to build near Sudbury would have been the single biggest energy user in the province. Without a special deal, it just wouldn't be happening here and it wouldn't be located here.

A couple of weeks ago, I toured Detour mines, located a couple of hours north of Cochrane, Ontario. I asked about their energy bills, and it's millions per month. But they also have an industrial rate, so they're paying up to about five cents a kilowatt hour, well below what the average person pays. But the billions of dollars invested in Detour Gold, and the billions of dollars being generated, wouldn't be there unless there were competitive enough electricity prices.

I worry that we won't have those future new mines and jobs because of the policies of this government that are driving up electricity prices. I would love to see affordability become something that the government is concerned about.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Don't forget about NIER.

Mr. Norm Miller: I heard the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—I didn't hear what he said, but he was making a comment. If he wants to heckle a little louder, I'd be happy to respond.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I don't want to heckle at all.

Mr. Norm Miller: No heckling; okay.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program.

Mr. Norm Miller: The minister just mentioned that we have the northern electricity program, which has been extended. That's absolutely necessary, because the basic cost of electricity is becoming so uncompetitive in the province.

The problem with this program—it's a good program—is that there's not enough money in it, and the problem is it's only for big mining companies. It doesn't apply to the small company that wants to grow. So if you're small, you're paying the unaffordable electricity price, which either puts you out of business or you're not able to grow because your cost structure is so expensive. The northern electricity program applies to a few of the really big energy users, to try to make the cost of their electricity somewhat comparable.

In wrapping up on Bill 112, the ban on door-to-door sales is the part that we absolutely like. We're pleased that the government listened to our one amendment to do away with the 20-day cooling-off period and to make it 10 days.

There are some other problems that they didn't listen to. The online verification that they aren't allowing—I think this phone verification system would be cumbersome. As I mentioned, the ban on commissions, I think, is a little heavy-handed.

In closing, our big concern is just that the affordability of electricity in this province is such a big factor affecting individuals and businesses. Of course, that's not being addressed by this bill.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well put, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the member for Toronto—Danforth.

Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to address the matter of Bill 112, the government's—and I say this with some irony—Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015.

1000

As you are well aware, Speaker, this is the third and final reading of this bill. The bill, like so many others, has been time-allocated. This is not a government that actually wants to have wide-ranging debate on the issues before this province. This is a government that, frankly, seems to be more and more adopting the habits that a recently defeated federal Conservative government made part of their lives and that I think changed people's perception of what kind of party they were. I think that will happen in Ontario as well.

Speaker, this government is taking a beating on the sale of Hydro One. It has intended to try and surround that sale with as much camouflage as it possibly can. If you listen to the Minister of Energy, he speaks about the power of the Ontario Energy Board to control prices, because he well knows that this ill-fated venture to privatize utilities—and not just Hydro One, but to allow privatization of electricity utilities across Ontario; in fact, to encourage privatization of municipal utilities across Ontario—will mean much higher hydro rates. His only shield, his only argument, is that he has a regulator that can actually take action to protect consumers.

In this act, Speaker, he substantially undermines that regulator. He substantially undermines the power of the public to intervene in rate hearings. He sets back regulation quite substantially. People have to understand that when they follow the debate on this bill. The minister ignores the reality of what has happened in Ontario for the last 12 years, and he ignores the reality of what happens when you have privatized energy systems.

Speaker, there are two bills here. One presents itself as a consumer protection act, and this is clearly where the government wants to focus. The second addresses itself to the whole question of the regulator and how that regulator will operate in the future. When we look at the privatization of Hydro One, we have to understand that the government is introducing a number of measures. This bill, Bill 135, to make it a far more investor-friendly situation, wants to make sure that investors' interests are protected and that the public's interests are put to the back of the line.

This bill will give the government explicit authority to bypass the regulator when it brings forward new transmission projects. These projects could be very expensive. They could be totally cost-ineffective. They could be projects that are driven politically by a cabinet that is responding to the demands of big players in the energy sector, demands that will be delivered behind closed doors with an expectation that this government will give them whatever they want.

What we have had historically—and I move on to talk about the question of the ability of the public to have its voice heard at hearings, the ability of the public to intervene in rate hearings, the ability of the public to address substantial changes to the electricity system. I'll admit that what we've had has had its flaws, but I have to say, Speaker, the reality of an energy system where people do get the opportunity to intervene is one that at least gives people the opportunity to put officials and decision-makers on a stand and under oath to answer questions about what actually is being done to the electricity system.

That is going away. This government has decided that what's good for investors is something that Ontario will have to live with. This bill will aid this government in privatizing Hydro One and allowing the privatization of utilities across Ontario. Right now, the government has all the power it needs to initiate and champion priority transmission projects. What it is doing with this bill is giving the government the power to bypass the Ontario

Energy Board and bypass public hearings where consumer advocates and those who represent major power companies, and major manufacturing and processing companies, would no longer have the opportunity to question whether or not the project was needed in the first place. Gone. Gone. The ability to actually look at whether or not something was necessary for the electricity system will be cut out.

We have had that happen already here in Ontario. I'll get into that later when we talk about smart meters, because it is entirely relevant to the approach the government is taking with this bill. The government took an approach with a regulatory process that sidelined the Ontario Energy Board, that never had hearings on the business case for smart meters—never. That burdened us with a \$2-billion bill for smart meters that produce virtually no savings and don't allow the government to meet its target for reducing peak demands.

The government has already gone down this road. It likes the road where the public is shut out because then it can do whatever it wants. It can make its friends as happy as all get-out, because those friends who are putting forward different projects, different technologies, don't have to worry for a second that their interests are going to be questioned or challenged because the government is going to back them to the hilt. They'll override the public regulatory process—public hearings—and just deliver the goods.

This government has already shown that it can't be trusted to bring forward policies that are allowed to be tested in open hearings with people who know the field, who can question and take apart bad projects.

For instance, the Ontario Energy Board is required to review and approve private sales of transmission companies to make sure they're in the public interest. If the government was actually sincere about making sure the regulator had power, then the OEB would be reviewing the sale of Hydro One. All the decision makers would be on the stand under oath, testifying as to the reasons for this privatization; interveners would be able to demand evidence and background documents and test them in the open light of day.

Speaker, let's be very clear: I don't think this government should be privatizing Hydro One or our electricity utilities—not for a moment. But even using the government's own logic, a sale like this needs to be put into a public forum where it can be dissected, and those who propose it can actually be forced to put the numbers on the table to show that it's valid or not valid and be forced to defend their theories about how a private market works in the electricity sector. They've already ignored the regulator on that. They're now going to make sure the regulator doesn't get to decide or assess whether or not a multi-billion-dollar transmission project makes sense or not. At every point, this government—talking about the regulator defending customers—is gutting the ability of that regulator to actually assess and protect. The government wants this to go through and, after all the horses have left the barn, kick the barn door closed and say, "Well, God, we took care of that."

Last week we went through this bill clause by clause. I attempted to amend this bill to prevent some of the most serious damage that I believe it will cause. Here's what I had to say about section 18 of the bill, the bill that allows this assignment of priority to transmission projects and this exempting transmission projects from review by the Ontario Energy Board:

"Section 18 ... allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council—effectively, the cabinet—to declare that any particular transmission line is going to be a priority and that there will be no review at the OEB as to the necessity for that line, whether it's justified for the system as a whole. The OEB will only be able to actually review expenses and determine whether or not, within the framework the cabinet has set, those expenses were reasonable and prudent."

I would say, Speaker, that there are other problematic parts of that bill, but this section is the one that has the most substantive impact.

I noted in the committee, as I did a few minutes ago, that cutting the Ontario Energy Board out when it came to taking a look at smart meters was part of the reason we got stuck with a \$2-billion bill for an investment that's producing virtually no return at all.

Mr. Wayne Gates: How much?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Some \$2 billion—\$1.9 billion and counting. The only thing it's doing is making some manufacturers of smart meters extraordinarily happy. The savings on a system that produces, say, 23,000 or 24,000 megawatts at peak capacity in mid-winter is about 200 megawatts—200. That's a fluctuation from hour to hour. Two billion bucks, Speaker: If your constituents wonder why they're having difficulty paying for their electric heating, I think it should be pointed out to them that the plan for smart meters that has loaded them with bills—loaded the whole system with bills—never went through an open review by a tribunal at the Ontario Energy Board, where the planners and the decision-making material could be tested.

1010

Speaker, I would say, with regard to transmission lines, that you remember the story that came out recently that Paul Bliss did for CTV about the Niagara reinforcement line, a \$100-million transmission line to nowhere. The Ontario Energy Board actually had substantial questions about that line. The government went ahead and had it built anyway. Hydro One still isn't allowed to charge higher rates for it; that's coming. But right now we, the people of Ontario, are on the hook for \$5 million a year in interest payments on this line that has never been activated. It has been there now for, what, five or 10 years? You're talking about very substantial amounts of money that are going to pay for interest for a line that's just standing there.

Imagine how many more useless lines and transmitters we'll be able to build with the Ontario Energy Board completely ruled out of the picture. Think about it, Speaker. Think about the fact that, every time Hydro One puts in a new transmission line or puts in a new transformer station, whether needed or not, they will be able

to charge the ratepayers of Ontario and get a guaranteed rate of return. It's a money machine and one whose misoperation can profoundly damage the people of this province.

Speaker, this section of the bill allows for all kinds of hanky-panky behind closed doors, an opportunity for people to demand favours and be given favours without any public assessment of the dollar impact of those decisions.

As we've seen with the Financial Accountability Office, he tried to get at the facts around the sale of Hydro One. What happened? He was told that the studies, the background documents upon which the government had made its decision, weren't accessible. They were cabinet secrets. This section of this bill will make far more electricity planning in Ontario subject to cabinet secrecy, unverifiable by the general public and unverifiable by those who get stuck with the bills. This bill is meant to aid the privatization of Hydro One; it is not meant to protect the interests of power consumers in Ontario.

I called for a recorded vote on this section. Every single Liberal in the room voted against my motion and voted to cut the public out—to exclude the public—from future consideration of proposed power lines.

The gas plant scandal arose when a government, in the heat of an election campaign, decided that it wanted to save a number of seats. We all know what happened in terms of its impact on our bills. This government is going to make the possibility of that scandal happen far more frequently in the future because, frankly, public scrutiny is being cut out.

Bill 112 also proposes to change how consumer interests are represented at Ontario Energy Board hearings. We have to ask, because it's not spelled out in the legislation, exactly what they have in mind. Is the government getting ready to stop paying money to cover the expenses of people who intervene on the part of consumers and put in their own little government-owned watchdog? It's an open question. It's not answered in the legislation or in the numerous discussions that are taking place more widely. I moved an amendment in committee to protect the current system of interveners being able to recover their costs so that we could have independent voices at the Ontario Energy Board. We need to have those independent voices at the Ontario Energy Board. Speaker, it is critical that that independent intervention be protected. I spoke to that; the government answer was, "All's fine."

Speaker, you're indicating subtly that you may want to get up.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm very pleased today that Rachael, the daughter of Pam Young, one of our employees with

OMAFRA, is one of the pages this session. On behalf of our ministry, we're very proud of this young lady being a page here during this session.

Mr. Han Dong: Amongst us is the chair of the Canadian Independent Music Association, Shauna de Cartier. I would like to welcome her.

Also, I have a wonderful group from COSTI in my riding visiting the Legislature as well. Welcome.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to welcome to Queen's Park today my wife, Kate, and our 27-month-old daughter, Annie-Grace.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Today we have five members of the Canadian Independent Music Association here to join us. Stuart Johnston, Lisa Fiorilli, Shauna de Cartier, Chris Moncada and Juno-award-winning artist Hawksley Workman are joining us here. They are just over in the members' gallery. We know that CIMA acts as an advocacy leader for Canadian independent music, and today is their Queen's Park day.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to introduce the page captain today from my riding, Michelle Lewis, and to welcome her mother, Nicole Knowlton, who is visiting us here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Later on today, I have a school, Centre Dufferin District in Shelburne. I just want to welcome them before they arrive.

Mr. Paul Miller: We have a new resident in the province of Ontario. I'm proud to announce my first grandchild, Elliot May Traquair. It's an old Scottish name, Traquair. She was seven pounds, born early Wednesday morning.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I know you're going to do a formal introduction in a few minutes, but if I may, I'd just like to steal a little bit of your thunder and introduce a few people by name who are here with us.

We have a delegation from the Lviv Oblast State Administration in Ukraine: Mr. Yuriy Pidlisnyy, who is the deputy head of the Lviv Oblast; Mr. Bohdan Chechotka, who is head of the health department; Mr. Yuri Kushnir, president of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program Alumni Association; and Vitalina Kushnir, who is a director at the Institute for Child and Family Development Charitable Fund. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I appreciate the assistance on the names.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce the newest grandfather in the Legislature, Paul Miller. I'd like to congratulate him and his family. The best of health and happiness always.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in the Legislature today is a very special guest: Jane Wright, who is the grandmother of my press secretary, Jesse Wright. This is Jane's first time visiting Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to acknowledge someone from my constituency who is receiving today the Ontario Senior Achievement Award: Mr. Gary Whitten, who is currently here today in our

Legislature. Thank you very much, and congratulations to Mr. Whitten.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This morning, the father of page captain Benjamin Huckabone will be visiting us. His father, Mark, will be visiting us from Pembroke, in the members' gallery. We hope he enjoys question period.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome Adam Cook, who is here today on behalf of Action Hepatitis Canada and who we enjoyed breakfast with this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: One of our colleagues is actually celebrating his birthday this Sunday, November 29. I would like to recognize the Minister of Health and our great friend Eric Hoskins, who is going to be celebrating his birthday. Congratulations and happy birthday.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have it on good authority that instead of "Grandpa," the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek will be called "Grumpa."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to look in my library to find out if that's unparliamentary; I'm not sure.

Further introductions?

Mr. Todd Smith: Well, he's not with us yet, but he is on his way this morning. He's Canada's heavyweight boxing champ. He's a good friend of mine. I hope that he can bring his belt into the House when he arrives; I've alerted security.

Dillon "Big Country" Carman is going to be joining us for question period a little bit later on this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, it's a big country.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery two delegations. We have a delegation from Turkana county of the Republic of Kenya, led by the Governor of Turkana county, the Honourable Joseph Koli Nanok. Welcome to our delegation and thank you for being with us.

We also have another delegation today in the Speaker's gallery from the Lviv province of Ukraine. Please welcome our guests, and thank you for being with us.

WEARING OF FOOTBALL JERSEY

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As you and all members know, the Grey Cup is taking place this Sunday in Winnipeg between the Edmonton Eskimos and the great Ottawa Redblacks. I'm seeking unanimous consent, in recognition that the Ottawa Redblacks are Ontario's team, to wear this jersey in the chamber today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Holy mackerel, this is going to be fun.

The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to wear the jersey of the Redblacks, Ontario's

team, today, and unanimous consent for him to get dressed. Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: On the back of that shirt he should put “Lucky.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don’t know what to make of this.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do you want in on it?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Actually, no, but I have something else.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. The member from Nepean–Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think that we should strike from the record whatever the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek said. He should withdraw that.

But in any event, I actually am introducing someone for my seatmate, who’s not in his seat right now. Ryan LaPalm, his friend from Belleville, is here. Hello, Ryan. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Premier: Every one of us in this Legislature knows someone who doesn’t have a family doctor. There are over 800,000 Ontarians without one. The government’s response has been to cut clinical care funding by more than 7% over the last three years. We all know someone battling addiction, whether you know it or not, and the government slashed addiction services funding by 50%.

The government ignores the struggle of these at-risk patients, the risks they face every day. These cuts target each and every community in Ontario. Will the government reconsider their health cuts before the end of the year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to comment on the specifics, but I also know that the Leader of the Opposition understands full well that health care funding in this province goes up every year. Year over year, funding has increased. He knows full well that the needs are expanding in the province, and that’s why funding for health care continues to go up.

There are thousands of more doctors in this province, thousands of more nurses in this province since we’ve been in office, because we understand how critical it is that people have the care that they need where they need it. I think it’s more than 90% of people in this province who have access to a primary care practitioner. We’ve

made a commitment that by 2018, everyone in the province will have access to a primary care practitioner. That’s one of the reasons that funding continues to go up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: If you take into consideration the federal transfers, the health budget actually went down. These cuts are having real effects. In Kingston, five family doctors were unable to join a local practice group. They were turned away from practising. In Peterborough, a family doctor was unable to join a family health team, leaving 750 patients stranded. In Oakville, a family doctor closed their practice, leaving 900 patients without a doctor to see. In Richmond Hill, five doctors abandoned their plans to open practices, leaving 5,000 patients waiting to find a new doctor. The government should be ashamed.

My question to the Premier is: Did the members from Kingston, Peterborough, Oakville and Richmond Hill stand up and speak for their patients, or did you ignore them? What is really happening?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would say to the Leader of the Opposition: What did he say, as a member from Ontario of the federal House of Commons, when Stephen Harper cut the federal health transfer to Ontario by \$8 billion? What did the Leader of the Opposition say at that point? Because—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that this has been a conversation of acute interest at the Premiers’ table. We are going to be putting health care on the agenda in our conversations with the new Prime Minister, because when that \$8 billion was cut from federal transfers to Ontario, I didn’t hear any voice from the Leader of the Opposition. I didn’t hear any concern from the Leader of the Opposition, who was an Ontario member in Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: While federal transfers continued to increase, you cut \$54 million. Those are the cold, hard facts. Right here in Toronto, a blood monitoring clinic couldn’t stay open because of the government’s last round of cuts. Those patients have seen dramatic delays in discharges, and it has resulted in longer wait times.

In Ottawa, two dermatology residency students left the province rather than set up shop here, when wait times are already far too long. In Ajax, 12 doctors aren’t able to offer flu vaccination clinics, affecting 8,000 patients. Again, all in Liberal ridings. I can tell you countless stories from our side of the aisle as well.

The Premier has either silenced her own members or ignored them. Why won’t anyone on that side of the aisle stand up to the Premier and say that the cuts to health care in your ridings are wrong?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You won't know when.

Just to remind the member to speak to the Chair. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that the leader of the official opposition was a member of the federal government at a time when they cut off refugee health care to deserving and vulnerable people in this country. I know he was part of the federal Conservative Party when they decided to eliminate any health accord with the provinces. I'm so pleased that the new Liberal government in Ottawa has made that commitment to negotiate and partner with the provinces and the territories to actually create a health accord that has been absent for nearly the last decade.

The truth is—and the member opposite knows this—I know that the Progressive Conservative Party does have a history of being challenged when it comes to the numbers, but he knows that the figures that he's using are estimates. If he were to look at the actual numbers that are available from public accounts, he'll see that we've continued to increase the health care budget year after year and will continue to do that.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Premier: The Globe and Mail headline was "Ontario Long-Term Climate Strategy Short on Details...." The National Post headline reads, "Ontario Leaves Many Questions Unanswered in New Climate Change Strategy...." The Post online said, "Ontario Climate Plan Shy on Detail." A CBC headline: "Expect Climate Change Plan Details in New Year...."

Was this just another example of photo-op environmentalism or do you actually plan to do something before you jet off for Paris?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say to the Leader of the Opposition that we have a plan. They had no plan. They don't talk about a plan. In fact, the member sitting behind him doesn't think that we should implement the plan that we have announced. So, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to tolerate shouting people down.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition read the stories underneath those headlines, and he will see that the outline that we have laid out is exactly what we said we were going to do. We made it very clear that we would bring out a strategy at this point. We will be bringing out a detailed five-year plan in the new year. That is consistent with the work that we've already done in terms of shutting down the coal-fired plants and the work that we are doing right now on the design of the cap-and-trade system.

There are members in his caucus who don't think we should have a plan at all and think we should scrap what we are doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I read those articles, and all those descriptions of your press conference said it was a news conference without news—a news conference without a plan. We need to do our part to fight climate change. We must leave Ontario a better place for generations to come.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. It goes both ways.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: In that spirit, I ask the minister and the Premier, as they always said: What's the cost of doing nothing? By looking at the headlines, their climate change strategy did just that.

What I want to know—it's a very reasonable question—is what is the cost of doing something? Will the Premier release details today or before she leaves for Paris? What is the cost for the average household of your climate change plan, if there is a plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm glad that the Leader of the Opposition has gotten to the real point of what he wanted to ask, which is that he doesn't think we should do this; his environment critic doesn't think we should do this. They don't think we should have a plan because they are unwilling to acknowledge that the cost of doing nothing, the cost—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did hear something I didn't like. If I knew who it was, I would ask them to withdraw. It stops now.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Increased insurance costs, the degradation of the environment, costs of food—all of those costs are costs that we cannot, as the human race, afford. It is imperative that we take action, along with jurisdictions around the world, to curb this development, to decrease our greenhouse gas emissions. That's why we're working to put a cap-and-trade system in place, and I know they—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Everyone agrees we should fight climate change. Our concern is, you had a news conference—it was a photo op. There is no plan. What we're asking for, very simply, is: Share with us your plan.

I've asked a very simple question today, but I will narrow it down further. In British Columbia, the Auditor General ensures that every dollar from the carbon tax goes back to families and businesses to help reduce emissions.

1050

Mr. Speaker, since we are still waiting for the details from the Premier, will she at least commit to us—will she commit to the Legislature—that her cap-and-trade program will have AG oversight and be revenue-neutral?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We just finished a five-year plan, which I don't think they've even read, which successfully reduced our emissions by 6% and had no negative impact and did not raise any prices, period.

Our intention with our next five-year plan is to achieve the same objectives. We're the only jurisdiction in North America that has actually closed coal plants and has actually achieved its objectives, save Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, the document here is quite detailed. It is more detailed than Alberta's, British Columbia's or any other's. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition should take a basic reading lesson, because it's in about grade 8 English, if he can't understand it.

Mr. Speaker, to answer his question directly, the plans that we are introducing will make life less expensive for Ontarians than inaction, and that has been demonstrated—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier told Ontarians that learning from other provinces where hydro rates are cheaper and they invest more in conservation is “trying to drive wedges among the provinces.”

The Premier ought to know that learning from others isn't wedge politics. The Premier knows that it's simply doing the right thing for Ontarians.

But why is the Premier so stubborn in refusing to look at other provinces? Is it because she knows that Manitoba, BC, Quebec—provinces with public hydro systems—have lower rates and invest more in conservation? Is that why?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I actually have found that sitting at the table with my colleague Premiers across the country has been a very valuable experience for Ontario. In fact, the member opposite might know that we have, as a result of those conversations, forged agreements with Quebec on the exchange of energy in peak and off-peak periods for us as a province.

We have worked to write a Canadian energy strategy. There were lots of voices across the country who said, “You'll never get agreement among all of the provinces and territories, because the geography is so different and

the systems are so different.” But we did get that agreement; we got an agreement.

The Canadian Energy Strategy is a foundational document, and it's actually a document that the new Prime Minister has signed on to. As we go into the Paris summit, it's very much going to inform our position there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yesterday, the Premier suggested that Ontario had nothing to learn from our neighbouring provinces. When our neighbours invest more in conservation and have lower rates, I think we should be learning from those provinces.

Why is the Premier so determined to push ahead with selling off Hydro One when all the evidence shows that it's bad for the environment, it's bad for families who are struggling to make ends meet—

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Oh, come on. That's BS.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy will withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Carry on.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's bad for the environment, it's bad for families who are struggling to make ends meet, and it's bad public policy. It's simply bad for Ontarians.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member opposite that you can't have it both ways. If we look across the country, you will find examples where there are private distribution companies. In fact, you look in this province and there's a mixed distribution in terms of private and public.

The fact is, it is one of the questions, when we were having our conversations about broadening the ownership of Hydro One—I actually said that. I said, “Let's look across other jurisdictions. Show me what the impact is of having some private ownership of a distribution company.”

The fact is that if it's a well-run company, if the services are met—and that is exactly what we want to have happen with Hydro One—then there is no negative impact. In fact, there can be a positive impact.

I am absolutely determined to learn from other jurisdictions. I work with my colleague Premiers, and I will continue to do that for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: We have evidence. We know that in provinces where there's public hydro, the rates are cheaper. We know that in provinces where there's private hydro, the rates are more expensive. We have the evidence. When electricity bills are cheaper in provinces with public power, we should be learning from them, not insulting them. When provinces with public power invest more in conservation, that's a lesson. When public hydro puts money into infrastructure, that's a lesson.

Instead, the Premier is committed to selling off Hydro One and putting the province into a worse financial

situation, as told by the FAO. Does the Premier really think that Ontario has nothing to learn from those neighbouring provinces?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I've answered that question a number of times in terms of working with my colleague Premiers. I will continue to do that. We are in fact collaborating to an unprecedented extent with provinces across the country, and I will continue to do that.

But the fact is, what the member opposite is not talking about is the differences in geography. The reality is that there is different geography across this country. There is different water power accessible to different provinces, and we all have to operate within our own geography.

So I will continue to look for absolutely the best deal possible for the people of Ontario. That's why we're working with Quebec. That's why there are conversations with Manitoba. In the interim, I want Hydro One to be the best-run company it can be. I also know that we must make those investments in infrastructure if we're going to be competitive, not just in the country, but internationally.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. The Liberals promised that selling Hydro One would fix transit. The fact is that the money brought in by the sale of Hydro One won't come close to delivering real help to families and cities coping with gridlock. In fact, the sell-off of Hydro One has nothing to do with building transit, and the Premier knows it.

TTC riders in Toronto are being asked to pay more for cash fares. City councils across the province are asking for support, yet transit riders everywhere are being asked to pay more for services while services are being cut. Why is the Premier failing commuters?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just have to say that the magical thinking is not on this side of the House. The magical thinking is on the other side of the House in the third party, where somehow all the projects that are needed across the province—the roads, the bridges, the transit systems—can all be built without making one tough decision. The fact is, that's not the case.

I would say to the member opposite that when he goes down the list of projects that we are building, whether it's the Kitchener line, which will be partly electrified, and the weekly trips will go from 80 to 250; or the Lakeshore East line, where the annual ridership will go from 10 million to 32 million; or the billion dollars for the Hamilton LRT; or the support for SmartTrack, which is the single most important project that the mayor of Toronto wants to implement—which one of those would he cut because of his magical thinking?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Premier knows, and her entire caucus knows, that selling off Hydro One is not the solution. There are far better solutions and far more solutions, and it's not the way to do it.

The Premier may not realize this, but people who rely on transit also pay hydro bills. Selling Hydro One off will hurt families twice: once as they continue to wait for the bus or sit in traffic on their commute, and again when they finally get home and open up their hydro bills. Does the Premier realize that selling off Hydro One actually hurts families twice?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What hurts families is if they don't have the roads, bridges, and transit that they need. What hurts Ontarians is if they don't have an excellent company delivering their electricity. What hurts Ontarians is if they don't have all the facts.

The reality is that there's a political campaign that the member opposite is engaged in right now with his party, to fearmonger among people about what's going to happen because we are investing in infrastructure and we're broadening the ownership of Hydro One.

The reality is that he doesn't talk to his constituents and the constituents in ridings around the province about the investments that their municipalities, their communities are going to get because of the decisions that we are taking.

1100

We know that there's not a municipality in this province that doesn't need infrastructure dollars. We're providing those infrastructure dollars, and we're making the tough decisions in order to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, what we know is that the vast majority of Ontarians don't want this government to sell off Hydro One. What we know is that the vast majority of municipalities don't want this government to sell off Hydro One. People are stuck in their cars or packed like sardines in transit and they're looking for some relief. Selling off Hydro One doesn't actually build transit, and according to the FAO, it could raise as little as \$1.4 billion. Selling off Hydro One is not going to build transit. The Premier knows this and her entire caucus knows this.

The TTC is Toronto's second-biggest electricity consumer, and GO electrification is going to mean more electricity consumption for GO Transit. Higher rates are going to have real impacts on these transit providers who—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The member from Essex and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, that's enough.

You have one sentence to wrap up, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Higher rates are going to impact transit providers, and that means higher fares. Will the Premier stop the sell-off before she does any more damage to this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for his question. This very same debate and discussion has come up several times in the Legislature over the last couple of

weeks. It's interesting, again, that the deputy leader of the NDP would ask us, or would talk about what's on the minds of our caucus on this side of the House. I said this last week, Speaker: What's on our minds is making sure that we build the province up.

What I think is important, though, is that the leader of the NDP and the deputy leader of the NDP have a conversation with backbenchers on that side of the House, because every single one of his NDP caucus colleagues has a specific request or a desire to see infrastructure projects occur in each of their ridings, whether we're talking about London, or Toronto, or Essex, or Niagara Falls, or the north. Four-laning highways—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Through the Chair, please.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —building up transit—in every single region of the province. Why won't you level with the people in your own—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Questions and answers are directed to the Chair. And if it continues with anybody, I'll cut you off.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of Transportation is threatening to take the title away from the Minister of the Environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that you've had your say, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, second time.

New question.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

Today the government will present its fall economic statement, albeit 11 days late. Thankfully, the Financial Accountability Officer already gave us some insight into the state of Ontario's finances. He told us of the province's deteriorating economic performance, slower GDP and weaker labour market outcomes. What he said was that the government continues to miss their lofty revenue forecasts, but continues to spend the money they didn't take in. We were told that the only way to right the ship is to lower the growth outlook to 3% and spend accordingly. The Global and Mail concurred, going so far as to suggest that the government is "living in a fiscal fantasyland."

Speaker, my question is: Will we finally see the truth about the state of the finances in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just go through the realities that we're dealing with. Year over year, we have beaten our deficit targets, and the Financial Accountability Officer's report said that we're on track to beat our targets again this year. That's exactly what the FAO has said. We're doing that because of the plan that we have.

Our plan is to build Ontario up, including investing in people's talents and skills, including the infrastructure investments that we were just talking about in the previ-

ous question, including fostering a dynamic business climate and working with businesses so they can expand and so that they can become exporters, and including creating a secure retirement pension plan. Those are the four pillars of our plan.

We're unlocking the value of assets so that we can make that investment of over \$130 billion for roads, bridges, transit, hospitals and schools. That will support 110,000 jobs a year. Since the recession, Ontario has created more than 500,000 jobs—559,600, to be exact. Those are the fundamentals that we'll be talking about in the financial—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: I question whether the fall economic statement will discuss the facts the government attempted to bury in order to lower their deficit this year.

On page 162 of a 167-page finance bill, there is one line that tells us exactly what the government has been up to all along. Schedule 22, section 7, item 1 authorizes the government to use the Trillium Trust money to fund or "reimburse" the crown for the construction of infrastructure. Exactly what we've been saying all along is now laid bare by their own document. The proceeds from the sale of Hydro One are not to fund transit. They're to "reimburse" the government for money that was already budgeted.

Will the Premier now confirm that this has been a transit sham all along?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, we've been clear about our plan to use the Trillium Trust to build key vital infrastructure projects, transportation projects. That is what we are going to do with that money. The money is in the Trillium Trust, and it is going to go to build those projects.

I think, actually, the member opposite knows that, because he understands that there are jurisdictions all over the province, including in northeastern Ontario, that need those infrastructure investments.

But let me just talk about the track that we're on. Ontario's unemployment, at 6.8%, is under the national unemployment rate of 7%. According to the Conference Board of Canada, Ontario is on track to grow about 2% this year, outpacing the projected 1.1% GDP increase for the country. Ontario is the first in North America for foreign direct investment for the second year in a row.

The reality is that we are on track, and we're going to stay on track.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. Under Bill 109, which the government is about to ram through, health care workers will no longer have the democratic right to choose the union that represents them in the case of a health sector merger. Under this legislation, if 60% of health care workers are in one union,

100% of workers will lose their right to choose the union that represents them in a merger.

In a memo prepared by the Ministry of Health, obtained through freedom of information, it clearly states that “no broad-based consultation” was done before this section of the bill was tabled, and cites consultation with only one stakeholder.

Why were there no broad-based consultations done before the government decided to strip away health sector workers’ fundamental right to a democratic vote to select the union they wish to represent them in a merger?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for the question. The Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act provides a framework to resolve a number of labour relations issues when there’s a restructuring in the broader public service.

When there’s amalgamation of a hospital, a school, a town or a city, two unions have to amalgamate, perhaps, in that circumstance. Where one union has a large majority, what is being suggested and proposed in the legislation is that this legislation, if passed, will say that we don’t have a vote; it goes to the largest sector, to the people that represent the most.

There’s a difference of opinion within the labour movement, I’ll admit to that. Some unions think it’s a good idea; some unions have concerns with it. The bill is at committee; it’s at the social justice committee. I understand that each and every one of those stakeholders is bringing their concerns forward to the committee. I look forward to the committee work on this.

Ms. Cindy Forster: In fact, on what appears to be the government’s very first piece of its massive health transformation plan, they admit they’ve done no broad consultations. In the memo that we obtained through FOI from the Ministry of Health, the ministry has admitted that “this issue isn’t even a problem.” Yet, the government is stripping health care workers of their most basic democratic right: the right to choose.

Speaker, will the Premier tell hundreds of thousands of health care workers in this province why it’s willing to actually strip away their rights without even having done consultation for something the government admits isn’t even a problem?

1110

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you once again to the member. As I said, there’s a variety of opinions on this, and that variety of opinions comes from within the labour movement itself. Some people have suggested that the amendments that are being put forward would reduce the potential for delay and the disruption that’s often associated with these votes. It would remove the large cost associated with it and would contribute to more harmonious labour relations.

Others have different opinions. I respect those opinions. In a very transparent way, this morning, this afternoon, those stakeholders are bringing forward their concerns. They’re addressing the committee on this issue. I suspect the committee will give this a good and true

deliberation, and will bring forward its best amendments if they’re needed.

AMATEUR SPORT

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. As every member in this House is aware, the Pan/Parapan Am Games hosted here in Ontario were the largest and most successful in the history of the games. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has previously addressed the members of the House about the success of the Pan/Parapan Am Games. Many suggested that no one would buy tickets to the games; fans bought 1.2 million tickets to the games. Many suggested that no one would cheer for the games; in fact, more than 1.4 million people attended the Pan/Parapan Am celebrations.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians are proud of the success of these games. Through you to the minister, I’m interested in hearing more about the legacy of the Pan/Parapan Am Games, and I’m interested in learning how the legacy has benefited amateur sport in Ontario.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora. I’m proud to say that not only did we host the largest and most successful games in the history of this country; we did it on time and on budget.

Because of that success, Ontarians have been left with a strong legacy of sports which will be felt for many years to come. Ontario demonstrated that we can increase our athlete success rates by winning the most medals of any Pan/Parapan Am Games. Ontario proved that it could be inclusive when we held the most accessible games.

On Thursday I was at Ryerson University and I announced the Ontario government’s plan to build a new plan—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: —to increase the success of our athletes in Ontario by announcing a sports strategy called Game ON.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Hon. Michael Coteau: This is the first sports strategy in Ontario in over 20 years. By—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Right after I mention, he decides to do it again. I’m just being lenient because of Wednesday.

Carry on.

Hon. Michael Coteau: By leveraging what we learned from the games, we will bring forward more change. The Game ON plan for Ontario represents another long-lasting legacy out of the Pan/Parapan Am Games to benefit Ontario.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Minister. I’m happy to see that the minister is using the momentum of the games to promote healthier, fitter Ontarians. It’s well understood that sport creates positive and lasting benefits

for health and wellness. We know that physical activity contributes to healthier bodyweight and better cardiovascular fitness for our youth and that physical activity can help to prevent chronic diseases later in life, like heart disease or cancer.

While we know of the benefits of physical activity, we also are aware that there exists a gender gap in sports, one that widens with age. For every adult female engaging in sport, there are two males. As an MPP and as a father of two grown daughters: What are we doing to address this gender gap, and what is our government doing to build up amateur sport?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member. Our sports plan focuses on three key areas: participation, development and excellence. We know that in different parts of Ontario, depending on where you live and on family income, there are barriers to achievements in sport.

We also know that participation by women and girls in sport is half the participation level of that of men. With the help of an advisory panel, this year we're going to look for new ways to advance athleticism and sport for women and girls in Ontario by increasing the amount of role models that exist.

In the last winter games, held out in BC, only 11 of the 108 coaches were female. But we also know, in contrast to that, that 97% of 400 female executives who were surveyed participated in sport. It's my hope that we can take what we have learned from these games and continue to advance sport in Ontario for everyone.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. The passage of Bill C-40, to establish the Rouge National Urban Park, this past January was a great day for Canada in creating the largest urban park in the world—some 20,000 acres. However, this minister threw the entire project into jeopardy by reneging on an agreement signed in January 2013 to transfer provincial land to the federal government to create the new park.

While the minister cited inadequate environmental protection as the government's rationale for going back on its word, a fundraising email sent out by the minister made it clear that the government's motivation was purely partisan. They made up an excuse, because they didn't want the Harper government to get credit for the new park prior to the next election. It's that simple.

Now that there's a new government in Ottawa, will the minister commit to stop holding up the Rouge National Urban Park and agree to transfer the land?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I was planting trees in the Rouge Valley before I even knew what partisan politics was about. When it comes to the Rouge Valley, I and my colleagues from Scarborough, and all of us on this side of the House, recognize that we have a responsibility—nothing to do with partisan politics. It's to do with our responsibility to the next generation to ensure that we

pass on this gem of an ecosystem of a park to that generation.

The government you spoke about, the Harper government, didn't take that responsibility seriously. Thank goodness the new Prime Minister and the new government do, and we are looking forward to working with them to put in place a real national park for the Rouge that is going to ensure it has the protections we have in place today, or may even enhanced protections. I'm looking forward to working with that new government to get that done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's absolutely ludicrous for the government to claim that Parks Canada does not provide some of the highest standards of forest protection and management, as the minister has done in the past. The provincial Environmental Commissioner recently said that the government "lack of dedicated funding makes it nearly impossible to protect new parcels of environmentally sensitive land."

The former CEO of Parks Canada, Alan Latourelle, went as far as to say, "Any individual or organization that directly or indirectly implies that the federal legislation for Rouge National Urban Park does not meet the standards of the current provincial legislation for Rouge lands is misleading the public."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw, because you cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Ted Arnott: This government has held up the Rouge National Urban Park for far too long. Will the minister listen to the experts, submit comments on the Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan and transfer the lands he committed to do in 2013?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, it is this government that has worked so hard over the last 10 years to ensure that the policies are in place to ensure that that park is protected for future generations. It is this Liberal government that, in the 1980s under David Peterson, saved those lands in the first place. This is something we feel strongly about. It's nothing to do with partisan politics, and the question from the member was about as partisan as you possibly could get.

This is about working together with the federal government to get this done right. We finally have in place a minister of the environment federally and a government that cares about the environment, that is determined to save this planet, determined to ensure that we preserve those ecological gems like the Rouge Valley. We're

going to get this done. We're going to get this done with Prime Minister Trudeau—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Just to remind the minister, when I stand, you sit.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Yes, sir.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

1120

DISASTER RELIEF

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. In December 2013, communities across the province were hit by a massive ice storm. At the time, municipalities were assured that 100% of eligible disaster costs would be reimbursed by the Ontario government, but communities across Durham region have received just a third of that so far, with no timeline in place for the remainder.

Residents of Durham want to know that they are not going to be left out in the cold, because, Speaker, winter is coming. Will the Premier please explain why she has broken her promise on ice-storm funding to the people of Durham region?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know the devastation that was caused by the ice storm. I was out; I was meeting with people; I was at the warming centres. I know that it was a real trial for municipalities.

I also know that municipalities are working with the ministry. I know there has been some money that has flowed. There is more money that I know needs to flow. We will continue that co-operation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Speaker, it has been almost two years since communities were hit by the ice storm, and for two years they have been left to wonder when they would see the support they were promised, if at all. Whitby is still waiting for half a million dollars, and my community of Oshawa is waiting for over a million dollars.

Does the Premier believe that two years is an appropriate time for these communities to be left in the dark, or does she believe her government can and should do better? Will the Premier commit today to ensuring that communities like Whitby and Oshawa have their promised funding immediately: Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite had a conversation with the municipal officials, she would know that claims are being reviewed. She would know that 28 claims have been fully reviewed and final payments have been issued. We have flowed over \$62 million as of September 2015.

In addition, to help municipalities and conservation authorities, the government has issued interim payments, because one of the issues that I recognized when I was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is that often there is an upfront payment that is needed; we know that that is sometimes what is needed.

But the claims have to be reviewed. That's why the ministry is working with the municipalities. We are doing that as quickly as we can, but there are two parties to that review process, and municipalities need to be working with the ministry and vice versa.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, we know that climate change is already impacting our environment and our economy. Extreme weather events create challenges for agricultural production around the world.

We also know that to find solutions to the challenges that we face, we must work together across industries to tackle climate change. Our government has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate its support for farmers and the broader agricultural industry in this mission. In supporting the entire sector through a range of business development programs that include advice, partnership and research, the government is encouraging innovation.

Ontario farmers are excellent environmental stewards. They understand the impact of climate change and are already taking action to fight it. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House about proactive measures that Ontario farmers are taking to reduce environmental impacts?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his question this morning and to let the House know that the new, thriving kale industry is actually centred in his riding of Northumberland–Quinte West.

We do know that there are 52,000 family farms in the province of Ontario. Of those 52,000 family farms, 35,000 have been involved, over the decades, in voluntary environmental farm plans contributing to our government's plan for climate change. Through their activity, they have improved the environment by some \$353 million of on-farm activity to improve their environment.

In February of this year, we announced a program, some \$16 million over four years, to improve water quality, particularly in Lake Erie. We're looking at ways to contain phosphorus loading and prevent the algae blooms that are now developing in the Lake Erie area.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you to the minister for that answer. It's great to hear that Ontario farmers are engaged in efforts designed to protect the environment. Taking action to modernize, innovate and adapt allows our industries, including agriculture, to put themselves on a sustainable path forward.

Minister, I know our friends from Ontario Pork joined us at Queen's Park yesterday. Speaker, could the minister inform the House on steps the agricultural group is taking to modernize, become more sustainable and protect the environment?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the great work that's being done by Ontario Pork. All sides of the House yesterday had the opportunity to attend their

reception. They just produced a new report talking about social responsibility for the pork industry in the province of Ontario. They've highlighted five key things they're doing to promote social responsibility in their industry. They're looking at farm management, they're looking at economic performance, they're looking at environmental stewardship, at animal care and food safety, and at their relationships with the broader consumer community in the province of Ontario.

We all know, on all sides of the House, that farmers are great environmental stewards. I'm proud of the work that they do each and every day. I want to salute Ontario Pork and Amy Cronin, who, with her husband, Mike, just got recognized as the Outstanding Young Farmers of Canada recently in Edmonton, Alberta—a good example of what they're doing in that industry to further social responsibility in Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Health. In September, Nelson and Cathy Samuel of Gravenhurst went public with an issue that they are facing. While on a vacation to Whitehorse to visit their daughter, Nelson's knee became infected to the point that he had to be transported by medevac to Vancouver for immediate treatment. It saved his life. The Samuels are now facing a bill of \$18,400. They're seniors on a fixed income, and this cost would be a big hit on their retirement savings. They even checked with OHIP before making the trip to make sure they had coverage.

Speaker, to the minister: What assistance can be provided for Nelson and Cathy in their time of need?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the member opposite raising this issue. With the permission of the family, I would be interested in learning more about the specific circumstances involved.

A number of members of this Legislature have come forward to me directly when such a circumstance does take place, and thus far, Mr. Speaker, I think that we can say that we've made significant efforts to resolve these specific challenges.

But it does point out a deficit, I think I would describe it, nationally, for people when they are travelling out of province. We have arrangements with all the provinces and territories and the federal government for reimbursement of health care costs. But to date—and this is partly due to when these measures were put in place—they haven't accounted for the type of air transport that the member opposite has alluded to with this example.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the minister for that response, but through the Speaker, again, to the Minister of Health: It has been over a month since the minister spoke to CTV News about this specific case. He said, "We want to make sure that Ontarians, when they travel, that they're right to have an expectation that urgent and immediate health care costs will be covered."

Recently, there was a case in Alberta of an Alberta mother who gave birth prematurely in a Timmins

hospital. In the end, she had her emergency travel costs covered jointly by two separate provincial governments.

Minister, the clock is ticking, as the Samuels' bill has now been transferred to an agency for collection. Through the Speaker: Will the minister commit to help my constituents Cathy and Nelson with the massive bill they are now facing?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In fact, the Alberta case that was referenced was covered by the private insurance that the family in question had. But that being said, I made the commitment at that time—and we have a federal-provincial-territorial meeting coming up in January in British Columbia, and I've asked our partners across the country to have a discussion about this specific issue. I think it's important and timely that we update the reimbursement that is available between provinces and territories. It doesn't, as I mentioned, currently cover air transport of this nature. I would certainly encourage any individual or family travelling outside of the province to have private health insurance to cover all necessities of travel if untoward circumstances do arise. But I have asked for this specific issue to be put on the national agenda so that we can address it in a comprehensive fashion across the country.

1130

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health.

For the fourth year in a row, I rise to ask the Minister of Health for an investigation into the substandard care of Dimitra Daskalos, who passed away in a Toronto hospital in February 2011. The family of Mrs. Daskalos is still awaiting answers and this government has failed to provide them. The daughter of Dimitra, Maria Daskalos, is here with us today.

I've sent numerous letters to your predecessor, asked questions in the House, made statements and presented a petition with over 5,400 signatures. I sent this minister a letter last February, 2015. The family still doesn't have answers to the questions that it asked.

Mrs. Daskalos was treated as a bed blocker and the hospital was clearly in violation of infection control guidelines when she was housed with other patients with an antibiotic-resistant disease.

Will the minister commit to an investigation of this case?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I want to acknowledge, speaking to you directly, your presence here today and my regret that the experience did happen—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —to you. I can only imagine the devastation that it has caused, Mr. Speaker, to the family and loved ones of this individual. I would be happy to discuss afterwards, as well, the specifics of this case.

In the supplementary, I think that I would like to also talk about changes that we've put in place that hopefully will provide avenues for individuals and families who do go through these tragic circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I just want to note, as well, that it was almost a year ago that this government decided not to give the Ombudsman power to investigate these kinds of cases.

Once again, I ask this minister to launch an investigation into the substandard care of Dimitra Daskalos, received while a patient at the downtown hospital, and her subsequent death, apparently due to the hospital's failure to comply with infection control protocols.

Although hospitals are independent corporations directly responsible for the quality of care they provide, the legal accountability and enforcement of breaches in hospital protocol rests squarely with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, why were infection control guidelines violated?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm very proud of what we have done as a government. We've created the office of the patient ombudsman specifically for cases like this, where individuals or family members, where an incident occurs—perhaps in a hospital environment or a long-term-care home—if they're dissatisfied with the process that takes place in the hospital, if they don't receive remedy for what they see as a grievance against them, very shortly they will have an avenue that they can go to, a patient ombudsman who reports directly to the Minister of Health within Health Quality Ontario and who will work to address their concerns.

We do have a responsibility as a government to make sure that our patients, Ontarians, are provided with the highest quality of care. When incidents do occur, when mistakes are made, when procedures aren't followed correctly, we have an obligation to make sure that action is taken. That's the commitment that we have, and our patient ombudsman will help us through that process.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Minister, you informed the House on Tuesday that the MaRS west tower project is currently 84% occupied. This is great news for our province, as well as our economy, which stands to benefit from the expertise and innovative research that MaRS will attract to Ontario.

Every day, I receive questions and calls from my local residents, especially the young people in Scarborough-Agincourt, inquiring about the west tower project. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please update the House on some of the important projects that are coming to MaRS west tower project?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is right. MaRS west tower is indeed a resounding success. As the member stated, MaRS is now 84% leased and is expected to be fully leased very soon.

What's key is that the tenants locating in this building are exactly the mix of tenants originally sought. There is a healthy mix of institutional tenants that drive research and innovation, with a growing number of private sector tenants that drive innovation, commercialization and job creation, which is exactly what it was all about to begin with.

Companies like Facebook, Airbnb, JLABS, League, Synaptive, Kindred, Teknion and many more have picked up leases there and will soon be operating in that facility, if they're not already. Just two weeks ago, we announced the addition of Autodesk, and I'll have more to say about that in a minute.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thanks to the minister for that answer and for all his hard work on this particular file.

Ontario is quickly becoming one of the strongest jurisdictions for tech innovation. This is truly a proud record. Autodesk is a key part of the information and innovation technology cluster, and an exciting addition to MaRS.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please provide the House with more information about Autodesk's addition to MaRS and what it means for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right: One of the greatest competitive advantages that Ontario has is our strength in tech innovation. The fact that Ontario now ranks number two to only the Silicon Valley in ICT, with 19,000 ICT companies innovating in our economy, is absolutely huge.

Our world is changing exponentially fast. Technology disruption is occurring in almost every sector of our economy and of our lives. Jurisdictions that want to compete in this new economy need to have strengths in disruptive technologies like 3D printing, supercomputing, strong tech engineering capacity and the Internet of everything. Autodesk is a company that is a global leader in all of these disruptive technologies. The siting of an Autodesk R&D centre at MaRS will be an incredible asset to our globally competitive innovation capacity in Ontario and make the Toronto-Waterloo super-technology corridor even stronger.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. Last week, I spoke with the leading experts in anti-human trafficking, who say that the province is not providing the resources needed for victim services. We have not heard anything specific to anti-human trafficking funding since 2011. The government says that they take this crime very seriously, but not seriously enough to initiate a provincial task force.

Just days ago, three people were charged with over 20 offences related to human trafficking and sexual assault of a 13-year-old girl. When will the Premier commit to creating a provincial task force and keep women and children safe?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member, my critic, for this very important question. I know we're on the same page, in agreement that human trafficking is a deplorable activity that, unfortunately, overwhelmingly targets women and girls. It's one I take extremely seriously, as the minister responsible for women's issues.

We've begun work on this issue by investing over \$9 million in the next three years in programs like our language interpreter services, and we want to continue to help support victims and provide increased services to them. Funding will also help victims with health care, legal and social services.

Human trafficking, I believe, is also an issue that cuts across ministries. There is a role to play in what the member is asking about for our Attorney General and our Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, we need programs specifically for human trafficking. It is a very separate and specialized crime that is not being taken as seriously as I'd like it to be.

I called for a task force because that was the provincial coordinating network that was encouraged to be set up by all the front-line workers. I'm not seeing that it's a priority for this government. I appreciate what the minister said, but it's not enough of a priority. As I said, the task force would see the coalition of front-line workers providing specialized, victim-centred care.

Some of the victim services, when they are available and we can rescue victims from the abyss of this perverted and insidious crime—they actually have to google “human trafficking.” I just want to clarify that the services aren't there.

I just want a simple yes-or-no answer, Mr. Speaker. Will the government finally implement the task force?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

1140

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First, I want to echo what the minister responsible for women's issues said. Human trafficking or sexual trafficking is a deplorable activity, and we all have to, collectively, work together with our partners out in the community to stop this practice.

This is an issue that is very actively being worked on through the violence-against-women round table. Just yesterday, there was a special meeting that was held where this issue was referenced. The Premier had the opportunity to attend that meeting, along with the minister responsible for women's issues and the Minister of Community and Social Services.

My ministry, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, is also working very closely with the Attorney General's office on this in terms of the Joint Working Group on Violence against Aboriginal Women and the FPT working committee—not to mention, there's about \$1.4 million being invested in our communities to deal with sexual—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Minister, it has been one year since this House unanimously passed my motion to create an action plan on Lyme disease within a year. Lyme disease is a significant and growing health issue across our province. To date, the provincial government does not have a plan, adequate medical testing and treatment, and many health practitioners are not Lyme-literate. Thousands of Ontarians are still suffering and seek medical attention outside the province and country.

Minister, we all in this House gave people suffering from Lyme disease hope. It's devastating to many that the Liberal Lyme action plan is all talk and no action.

Health Canada predicts that there will be up to 18,000 cases of Lyme per year in Canada by 2020, and Ontario currently has the highest number of cases in the country.

Minister, it has been a year. When will this House act? Where is the will of this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank the member opposite and acknowledge that he has, for quite some time, been a very strong and positive advocate for individuals who are suffering from Lyme disease in this province.

I know he does know that the government is very committed and I'm personally very committed to protecting the people of Ontario from Lyme disease. In fact, we have an action plan, but we've committed to updating and strengthening that action plan. What we've done is—and the member knows this as well. I believe, in the summer—and I attended the group's first meeting—we actually created a Lyme disease stakeholder group which is comprised of many individuals who have Lyme disease themselves or family members with Lyme disease or are strong and powerful advocates for people living with Lyme disease. We've launched that stakeholder group to lead our review of a Lyme disease action plan and educational process.

All of those elements that the member opposite has rightly pointed out need to be done and strengthened.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It looks like we've got a few, so let's be patient.

The member for Huron—Bruce on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The privilege of freedom of speech is a very powerful tool in this Legislature, Speaker, but it should never be used for political purposes. Earlier today, the Premier knowingly made an incorrect accusation about me, and I would—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member also knows that only members themselves can correct their own record.

VISITORS

Mr. Norm Miller: I see that in the members' east gallery, the mayor of Kenora is visiting. Dave Canfield, welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the Minister of Northern Development and Mines wants to get in on this, so I'll offer him the opportunity to do the same.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Well, you're very kind, and thank you to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

It's just great to have the president of the North-western Ontario Municipal Association, the mayor of Kenora and a great northerner with us today. Welcome, again, Dave Canfield.

Ms. Soo Wong: I believe we have guests of mine from Scarborough-Agincourt. Page Aislin Perry's parents, Don Perry and Gillian Hutchinson, are here today. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd just like to recognize my very good friend Dave Canfield, the mayor of Kenora. He's over here in the west gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today the mayor of Kenora. I'd like to welcome him.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote and an amendment to a motion for allocation of time on Bill 144, an Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats.

On November 25, Mr. Bradley moved government notice of motion number 44. Ms. Jones then moved an amendment to Mr. Bradley's motion as follows:

That the paragraph starting with "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet" be struck out and replaced with:

"That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 2, 2015, from 9 a.m."—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? No?

—"to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Thursday, December 3, 2015, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

"That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 144"—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

All those in favour of Ms. Jones's amendment to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras
Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Sattler, Peggy
Brown, Patrick	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Campbell, Sarah	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	Martow, Gila	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	McDonnell, Jim	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	Walker, Bill

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Orazietti, David
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Thibeault, Glenn
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 52.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the amendment lost.

Are the members ready to vote on the main motion? Yes?

On November 25, Mr. Bradley moved government notice of motion number 44. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a "no."

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

All members please take their seats.

Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 44. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza

Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad

Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor

Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Thibeault, Glenn
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

and my good friend Kent Emerson from finance. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would have jumped on this quicker, but I'm going to try to do my best. I think he's everyone's friend. There is a former member here from Scarborough-Agincourt in the 34th to the 39th Parliaments: Mr. Gerry Phillips. Welcome, Gerry. Thank you for joining us today.

I hope my coughing didn't disturb the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is my pleasure to introduce friends and guests from the Tamil community who are here today to hear a statement on Tamil remembrance day. We have Eric Xavier, Navajeevan Anantharajah, Nimalraj Vinayagamoorthy, Navaneshan Murugandy, Rahulan Sana, Kamal Bharathy, Pon Balarajan, Parasuran Rajendran, Nagamany Logendralingam and Narayana Moorthy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL LAND TRANSFER TAX

Mrs. Julia Munro: Today, I rise to draw attention to the opposition in my riding of York-Simcoe to the Liberals' latest tax plan.

Young couples often dream of buying a home, a home to build a life in, a home to raise a family in. This is a dream that has been shared by generations. However, the Liberal government is threatening to make this dream even further out of reach. The proposed municipal land transfer tax is simply another tax on homebuyers. If introduced, this tax would make Ontario the most expensive place in North America to buy a home, adding about \$4,600 to the price.

Recent studies show that more than one in four Ontarians agree that this proposed new tax would limit their ability to buy a home. When asked if they opposed the implementation in their area, that number jumped to nine out of every 10. When this tax was introduced in Toronto in addition to the already existing provincial tax, there was a decline of 16% in the sale of single-family homes.

Mr. Speaker, add all the taxes Ontarians pay, and then add to that their ever-growing hydro bills and the ill-advised ORPP. Quite simply, our taxpayers are tapped out.

This tax is an unfair burden on our young couples and families who are working hard toward their goals.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have been inundated by pleas for help from desperate northerners who are struggling to stay afloat. Northerners are telling me things like, "I live in Dryden, and food prices are terrible. You cannot afford to buy meat unless it is on sale." The writer, Joann, goes on to say it was cheaper to buy food in Sault Ste. Marie

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Brown, Patrick
Campbell, Sarah
Clark, Steve
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gretzky, Lisa

Hardeman, Ernie
Hatfield, Percy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia

Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
Pettapiece, Randy
Sattler, Peggy
Scott, Laurie
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to welcome my wife to the Legislative Assembly today. Zenny, thank you for being here.

I'd also like to introduce my goddaughter Cassandra Ruggiero, who's here as well. Thank you.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I have guests here who should be joining us shortly. They're here on a delegation from India. It's Mr. Dalip Sharma, Professor Paramjit Kaur, Professor Maitreyee Dutta, Professor Arvind Bal Gupta, Professor Bakhshish Chand Choudhary, Professor Gurpreet Kaur, Manjeet Kaur, Sumitra Choudhary, Vibhor Chahra and Kanwar Dhanjal, who should be joining us shortly.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd just like to introduce a good friend of mine who is in the west gallery, the editor of Uthayan newspaper, Mr. Logan Loganathan.

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to introduce and welcome my good friend and my former boss Mr. Gerry Phillips, such an important member of this Legislature,

when she was there on a trip and drive it back to Dryden, frozen in a five-day cooler, than it would be to buy it in her home community.

Jamie writes, "When I'm visiting my dad in southern Ontario and see how cheap groceries are there in comparison to here, I'm in total disbelief. Food prices are getting exorbitant and unaffordable."

And these are examples from the urban areas in my riding. Only Ontario's one percenters can afford to buy nutritious food in our remote First Nations communities.

Northerners are pushed to the brink, and they see the writing on the wall. We know what happens when the cost of living outpaces our wages, pensions and social assistance rates. It means we can no longer cover essentials like food, housing and hydro bills. As one northerner succinctly writes, "Between the price of food and ever rising cost of hydro, I think many more of us will be homeless within the next five years."

This government has a lot of catching up to do to ease the heavy burden on northerners. We're looking to this provincial government to do the right thing and act now to make life more affordable in Ontario's north.

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Yvan Baker: This week is Holdomor awareness week, and I'm standing to pay tribute to the Holodomor. This week, we pay tribute to the 82nd anniversary of the famine genocide known as the Holodomor, when Joseph Stalin closed Ukraine's borders and confiscated all grain to destroy the Ukrainian population that was opposed to his rule—a population that sought the same freedom and the same independence that the people of Ukraine are fighting for today. Seventeen people per minute, 1,000 per hour and 25,000 per day were dying at the height of the Holodomor. The world was silent, and millions died as a result.

My grandmother was one of the people who survived the famine. She used to say that she hoped the victims of the Holodomor would not only be remembered, but honoured. Honoured, she said, meant not just remembering or commemorating them, but taking the steps to make sure that a tragedy like this never happens again.

That is why I'm so proud to stand here today with our Premier and with the Minister of Education. They have worked with the community to do several things that are very important. They have ensured that the Holodomor is in the Ontario curriculum, so that every young person can learn about the Holodomor, and they have provided funding to the Holodomor Mobile Classroom and the Holodomor awareness tour, a bus that has been retrofitted that will travel the province and educate our young people across Ontario about the Holodomor and the lessons of the Holodomor.

This week, it is important that we not only commemorate and remember, but that we also redouble our efforts and commitment as a people to learn from tragedies like this one and make sure that tragedies like this—crimes like this—never happen again.

Today, by taking these steps, the Premier and the Minister of Education have done what I think my grandmother and so many victims in the past have asked for. They have helped to commemorate the victims, they have helped to remember the victims and they have helped to honour them.

TAMIL COMMUNITY

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I am honoured to rise today and speak about Tamil remembrance day. I would like to welcome to the Legislature my friends from the Tamils for Patrick team, the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam, the Uthayan newspaper, Ekuruvi and CMR Tamil Radio.

We all remember and mourn people who were killed during the war in Sri Lanka. For the people of Tamil Eelam, and for Tamils living in Canada and many other parts of the world, November 27 is the day on which they remember and mourn over 100,000 people who were killed during the war. None of the perpetrators of this war crime have been brought to justice.

1310

The genocidal onslaught for the Tamils on the island of Sri Lanka is still a reality on many parts of the island. They seek the attention of the greater Canadian community and its support in order to live with dignity and freedom in their own land. On this day, they seek to rededicate themselves to the causes of justice, freedom, and the elimination of racism, so those who have died shall not have died in vain.

Like all free people in this world, the Tamil population also wants the freedom to express their political will through a referendum, in accordance with international norms, on the island of Sri Lanka and in the Tamil diaspora.

I have many friends in the Tamil community, some who are here today, who have made Ontario their home after experiencing the tragedy of this genocide in Sri Lanka. The Tamil population has contributed significantly to our province, and their warm generosity and rich culture are reflected in what makes Ontario great.

On behalf of our leader, Patrick Brown, and the PC caucus, I say that we stand firmly with you in your quest for peace, freedom and justice in Sri Lanka as well as the elimination of racism everywhere.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I regretfully inform all of our members who are observing that you're only allowed to observe and that any demonstration is not allowed.

And I would appreciate it if the member from Hamilton Mountain would not do any coaching.

Miss Monique Taylor: I apologize, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that our guests here understand that New Democrats support what was just said.

ATTAWAPISKAT HOSPITAL

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm here today to report some good news from the James Bay coast and Attawapiskat.

As you know, some time ago, last December, there was a diesel spill at the Attawapiskat hospital, a fairly new facility that was built some 20 years ago. The fuel-handling system that feeds the generators and feeds the heating system, for some reason—this brand new system that's supposed to prevent a spill—spilled, and the diesel contaminated underneath the hospital. As a result, we ended up having to evacuate that hospital. People had to be sent pretty far away from the community to be able to secure a bed. Those who stayed in the community we had to double up at the health centre and other places, to offer services.

I want to say that the work of the community, the work of Weeneebayko hospital, and also the work of our minister, Minister Hoskins, were key to being able to get this thing unstuck.

I want to make this point. We had a diesel spill in Attawapiskat at a school. It took over 20 years and the death of a young woman for that school to be rebuilt by our federal government.

I just want to say that our decision to transfer health care on the James Bay from the federal government to the provincial government was the right thing to do, because in this case, because the Ministry of Health and the province are in the business of delivering health care in this province, we had the capacity to respond to what was a crisis. The minister did his job, the people in the community did their job, Weeneebayko did their job, and what's best is our hospital is now opening. We still have some issues that we have to deal with, but I think it shows that when the province is involved on First Nations issues on-reserve, we can do a heck of a lot better than the feds can.

I want to thank all those people, including the minister, who were involved.

INTERFAITH REFUGEE RESETTLERS

Mr. Chris Ballard: With the current Syrian refugee crisis gripping the national conscience, communities need to come together to welcome these families with open arms, to ensure their basic human rights are met.

One organization in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora that's making a difference is the Interfaith Refugee Resettlers. This organization is made up of members from Trinity Anglican church, Aurora United Church and the Newmarket Islamic Centre. Together, they're working to sponsor a refugee family. This includes, of course, raising funds for accommodation, food, clothing and ESL training to help the family transition to life in Canada.

Together with AURA, a Canadian charitable organization that is assisting in the sponsorship and resettlement of refugees, the Interfaith Refugee Resettlers have set up their subcommittees and they're well on their way to raising their \$30,000 target. In fact, they're confident

they'll be able to raise double that and perhaps bring two families to Newmarket–Aurora. It's their hope and mine that the residents of Newmarket–Aurora and communities across the country come together to support future families that will be starting new lives in Canada.

I'm also proud to represent a government that promotes a welcoming and inclusive society by supporting the plan to bring 10,000 Syrian refugees to Ontario. However, without the assistance of community organizations such as Interfaith Refugee Resettlers, this goal is not attainable. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home."

Organizations such as the one in Newmarket–Aurora demonstrate how local actions can help make this world a better place.

THOMAS FLEMING

Mr. Tim Hudak: It was just over a year ago that I stood here and talked about the death of Art Fleming, one of the most respected and beloved figures in west Niagara. Today, sadly, I want to acknowledge another great man from the community of Beamsville, in west Niagara, who we lost to cancer on November 15. Sadly, it's Art's son Thomas Fleming.

I can't imagine the depth of loss—such a young age, a vibrant man—that his wife, Jo-Anne, has gone through with their children, Andrew and Rachel. My heart particularly goes out to his mom, Val, who, sadly, has buried both her husband and her son within a year.

Speaker, Tom learned a lot from his dad, both in business and in life. He had strong business smarts. He successfully ran the local family business, Fleming Chicks. He was at Queen's Park many times. I suspect many of my colleagues here will remember Tom. He was a leader in the poultry sector. He was known for his firm, warm grip and his bright smile. I suspect he voted the right way, but he had tremendous respect for this institution and the work that is done under this roof.

He always had a bit of a mischievous twinkle in his eye. I remember one of the first times I spent with Tom, who was always a great adviser to me on agricultural issues. I went to Fleming Chicks. Newly hatched chicks come out on a conveyor belt and they go round in a circle, and then those working at Fleming Chicks sort the chicks—between male and female. They grow at different rates. He asked me to take part in this. There are no pink or blue diapers for the chicks, Speaker, so I did, to confess—I hope it's parliamentary—what most people would do: I looked between the chicks' legs. I thought that was the quickest route. It doesn't work so hot for chicks. It's something to do with the wings. I don't know if I still have learned. Tom and his team had a good laugh at that. I suspect I am not the only politician who has been put through that process. But it spoke to his spirit.

I speak fondly of his strength in the community. He also was a great singer and always led his choir. Knowing Tom's character, his strong Christian spirit, his great singing voice and the fact that he was not afraid to throw

a few elbows from time to time, he's probably leading a choir of angels now, I'm sorry to say.

A great man, a sad loss, one of our leading citizens of west Niagara. He'll be missed.

HATE CRIMES

Ms. Harinder Malhi: In recent weeks there has been an upsurge in racially motivated and unprovoked attacks on the Muslim community.

Here in Ontario, a string of suspected hate crimes has taken place in the days following the horrific Paris attacks. A mosque in Peterborough was badly damaged by a fire that appears to have been set deliberately. In Kitchener, a Hindu temple's windows were broken by rock-throwing vandals. In Toronto, a Muslim woman reported that she was attacked while on her way to pick up her children and that the two men who beat her called her a terrorist. These are just a few of the incidents.

It is likely that these incidents are misguided retaliations, by a few malicious individuals, for what happened in Paris, but that does not make it acceptable. Such violence has no place in our society. These hateful incidents are completely conflicting to Canadian values. We are an all-inclusive, global community. We must accept everyone as equal human beings.

The safety of all Ontarians is the collective responsibility of this government, and it is my job as the member for Brampton–Springdale to raise issues affecting my constituents. I call on our law enforcement agencies to ensure swift action is taken against those perpetuating violence, and ask everyone to remain vigilant.

Ultimately, whether it happens in Paris, Baghdad or Beirut—or here in Ontario—an attack that causes terror is a terrorist attack. Such cowardly acts of violence are affiliated with nothing but their own evil.

1320

As Ontarians, as Canadians, we must stand in solidarity in condemning terror, which has no place in our world. I stand with all our brothers and sisters of the Muslim community in condemning these acts. Families, friends, colleagues and neighbours have been affected by the violence and vandalism. Let us stand as one in providing support to those deeply affected by these horrific attacks.

LAKE SHORE SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: In the spirit of the season, I want to bring to the Legislature's attention that for the past 25 years, Santa Claus has arrived a little bit early in Etobicoke–Lakeshore, as our residents celebrate the start of the holiday season with the annual Etobicoke Lake Shore Santa Claus Parade.

This is the 25th anniversary of the parade, ranked as one of the four best in Ontario. The parade plays an important role in our community, bringing together local businesses, industry and residents to pull together the best possible event, to welcome Santa Claus to our neigh-

bourhood and to the region. There will be 15 amazing floats created by volunteers; 10 marching bands; representatives of first responders; athletes and mascots like Carlton from the Maple Leafs and Jason from the Argonauts and over 250 local volunteers costumed as clowns, polar bears and Smurfs. Local organizations like Storefront Humber and LAMP Community Health Centre also get in on the fun. This parade is filmed by Rogers cable. It attracts about 60,000 people each year.

Again, I want to thank the BIAs of Lakeshore Village and Long Branch for getting together to help launch this 25 years ago by just borrowing some trailers and getting a group of local people together to work on it—people like local realtors Carl and Liz Porritt, who donated a great deal of time and spirit to have this done.

I have the honour of having helped the organizers to secure their very own Santa's workshop over the years, where they can work on and store the floats throughout the year.

My six-year-old daughter can't wait to join me at the Etobicoke Lake Shore Santa Claus Parade on December 5 to greet Santa in Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The only thing that saved you was invoking Santa Claus—going over time.

I do want to remind all members of their word count. It's time-consuming, and although it's friendly, we try to stay within the time frames.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Miss Monique Taylor: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 14, 2015, Miss Taylor from the Standing Committee on Estimates reports the following resolutions:

Resolved, that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted—

Miss Monique Taylor: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 63(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the committee will be placed on the Orders and Notices paper.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WASTE-FREE ONTARIO ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS DÉCHETS

Mr. Murray moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2015 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2015 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la récupération des ressources et l'économie circulaire et la Loi transitoire de 2015 sur le réacheminement des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to introduce the Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2015. If passed, the proposed omnibus bill would enact two acts related to reducing waste, and replace the existing programs operated under the Waste Diversion Act, 2002.

The Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2015, would:

- establish an overarching provincial interest in resource recovery and waste reduction and enable the government to issue policy statements to support this interest;

- authorize policies that advance the provincial interest and require provincial ministries, municipalities, producers and others with obligations under the specified acts to perform in a manner that is consistent with those in the policy;

- make producers accountable in full for recovering resources and reducing waste associated with their products and packaging; producers and anyone else involved with reducing, reusing and recycling would need to register, report, promote and encourage public participation in recycling activities;

- overhaul Waste Diversion Ontario, the oversight body currently overseeing waste diversion programs, into the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority, with new powers, compliance and enforcement tools, and enhanced oversight and accountability.

Just briefly, Mr. Speaker, the second act in the omnibus bill, the Waste Diversion Transition Act, would ensure that the existing waste diversion program can be smoothly transitioned into the new producer responsibility model. This would ensure that Ontarians' access to existing recycling services, including the blue box, is not disrupted.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to thank the many businesses, environmental groups, municipalities and community leaders who played such a large role in this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We always have to ensure that all comments are from the explanatory notes. That would be helpful. I appreciate that.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice with respect to private members' public bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that the order of the House dated July 17, 2014, referring Bill 12, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to tips and other gratuities, to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, be discharged; and

That the order of the House dated May 7, 2015, referring Bill 33, An Act to reduce the abuse of fentanyl patches, to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, be discharged; and

That the order of the House dated September 17, 2015, referring Bill 117, An Act to amend the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007, with respect to notices of critical injury or death, to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, be discharged; and

That the order of the House dated November 19, 2015, referring Bill 141, An Act to require research to be undertaken and programs to be developed for pregnancy loss and infant death and to proclaim October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day, to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, be discharged; and

That Bills 12, 33, 117 and 141 be instead referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy shall meet commencing at 2 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2015, and may continue to meet in the evening if required, for the purpose of conducting up to one hour of public hearings on each of the bills; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bills with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Tuesday, December 1, 2015; and

That the committee shall meet commencing at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, December 1, 2015, and may continue to meet until 12 midnight, if required, to complete clause-by-clause consideration of each of the bills; and

That the committee shall report Bills 12, 33, 117 and 141 to the House on Wednesday, December 2, 2015. In the event that the committee fails to report any of the bills on that day, such bills shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That on Monday, December 7, 2015, up to one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of each of the bills, apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House, at the end of which time the Speaker shall put the question for third reading of each bill, respectively, without debate or amendment.

1330

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Without further debate or amendment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Without further debate or amendment, yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader moves that the order of the House—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense?
Dispense.
Do we agree? Carried.
Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice with respect to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed. Deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to sit for up to seven days during the winter recess for the purpose of conducting pre-budget consultations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader moves that the Standing Committee on Finance—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense?
Dispense.

Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Charles Sousa: I rise today to present the 2015 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review.

The purpose of this report is to update the status of our plan since the 2015 budget and to provide a snapshot of the progress made in building Ontario up.

In the 2014 and 2015 budgets, we laid out a comprehensive plan to enhance greater prosperity for Ontarians by:

- investing in people's talents and skills;
- creating an innovative and dynamic business environment;
- building modern public infrastructure; and
- strengthening retirement security.

We've taken major action on all these fronts to achieve positive results.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is in the midst of fundamental change. Our government is not only embracing change; we're driving it.

Moreover, we're investing in our economy and in our people and we're taking deliberate steps to exceed our targets by reducing the deficit and balancing the budget. We've put forward a positive plan to achieve prosperity.

We're making progress and we're sticking to our plan.

Ontario's economy continues to grow in a challenging global environment.

Key economic indicators such as the employment rate and real GDP show that the province continues to advance and is overcoming challenges posed by the global recession. In fact, private sector economists expect Ontario to lead Canada, with higher levels of GDP growth, at 2.3% per year, on average, over the next three years.

Ontario employers are hiring. More than 560,000 jobs have been created since the recessionary low in 2009, the majority of which are full-time and pay above-average wages.

Furthermore, unemployment has improved steadily over the past six years, reaching 6.8% in October and beating the national average.

Mr. Speaker, global economic forces are indeed challenging, and we need to be at our best. Still, this heightened competition and technological advances also offer new opportunities to be seized, and Ontario companies are doing just that.

To help grow our economy, we've lowered Ontario's corporate income tax rate so that it is lower than the comparable rate in any US state. We've reduced red tape for businesses, saving more than \$50 million over the past four years, and we've promoted Ontario businesses internationally through our trade missions. As a result, Ontario remains the top destination in all of North America for foreign direct investment.

Our government recognizes that Ontario's economy is evolving to a knowledge-based, innovation economy.

We will continue to devise bold new strategies.

For example, we're strengthening our financial services sector. It accounts for almost 10% of Ontario's GDP. It has created jobs almost twice as fast as the overall economy. Toronto is now ranked second in North America, behind only New York, by the Global Financial Centres Index.

To bolster our leading international position, we're modernizing regulation in financial services, including reviews of the mandates of key agencies. This will strengthen consumer and investor protection. We're promoting Ontario's capital as a global financial services hub. We recently established the RMB currency hub, the only one in North America, to make doing business with China that much easier.

Ontario is taking a leadership role in establishing the Cooperative Capital Markets Regulatory System. This system would enhance Canada's competitiveness globally.

Ontario is embracing new technologies. Consumers are using their hand-held devices to conduct their transactions more quickly and easily. Our government recognizes that the sharing economy, a system of apps that drive peer-to-peer-based sharing of goods and services, is here to stay.

That's why we've created the Sharing Economy Advisory Committee. It will harness opportunities and

oversee development and coordination of the sector's potential while protecting consumers and businesses.

L'Ontario fait face à un environnement de plus en plus compétitif à l'échelle mondiale. Nous serons là pour favoriser la prospérité des entreprises de la province.

To that end, our government is:

- promoting the scaling-up and growth of successful firms;

- spurring an innovation-driven, knowledge-based economy; and

- modernizing regulatory systems.

Improving competitiveness means lowering costs, and that's why we're also proposing to remove the debt retirement charge for commercial, industrial and non-residential electricity users on April 1, 2018—nine months earlier than previously estimated.

This will save a typical large industrial company about 7%; large, northern industrial companies more than 8%; and a small business about 4% on their electricity bills. It reduces their costs, but equally important, it gives them certainty on managing their bills.

Another major pillar of our plan is making the largest public infrastructure investment in our province's history.

We're investing more than \$134 billion over 10 years in roads, bridges, public transit, hospitals and schools. In fact, a recent report by the Broadbent Institute showed that for every dollar spent on public infrastructure, our GDP improves by \$1.43 in the short term and up to \$3.83 in the long term. That's solid return on investment.

Investing in infrastructure will make our province more competitive, and it makes our province work even better.

Since the 2015 budget, the province has announced support for more than 200 infrastructure projects. These projects keep people and goods moving, connect communities and improve quality of life. Examples include:

- building the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, with an investment of \$5.3 billion;

- widening stretches of Highway 7 in Kitchener;

- expanding Highway 69 in Sudbury and Parry Sound;

- continuing to work on the Confederation Line, Ottawa's LRT project; and

- all across Ontario, investing \$25 million over three years to improve routes for cyclists.

Mr. Speaker, that's building Ontario up.

By unlocking the value of certain provincial assets, we're also able to reinvest more funds in new assets to generate more economic benefit. The people of Ontario are already realizing greater value from the Hydro One IPO. We will generate more value from selling head office buildings of LCBO and OPG, as well as repurposing the Seaton and Lakeview lands.

The net gains will generate billions more to invest in new projects and communities right across the province.

These funds will be dedicated to the Trillium Trust and earmarked for Moving Ontario Forward. We're on track to achieve our optimization targets while minimizing the degree of borrowing.

As well, Mr. Speaker, Ontario has made significant progress on creating more convenience and choice for consumers. This includes moving forward with the sale of beer in grocery stores.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Yes, by all means. Here's to that.

We have further negotiated a level playing field for smaller brewers while keeping Ontario beer prices below the Canadian average.

This is the largest shakeup in beverage alcohol in Ontario since the end of Prohibition.

Building Ontario up means planning for the future.

Building on our innovation and creativity is key. Our advantage is a highly skilled workforce. It's the talent of our people that drives a province's economic growth and competitiveness.

We're committed to investing in people's talents and skills.

From the earliest years, we're helping students to be prepared to succeed in an ever-evolving economy.

It begins with the youngest of learners before they even get to school, by investing \$120 million over three years to create about 4,000 more licensed care spaces, and then by expanding the Specialist High Skills Major program and launching Experience Ontario so high school students graduate, turning their passions into careers.

1340

And should they go further, we have also increased support for post-secondary students. We have modernized the Ontario Student Assistance Program and we're expanding access to eCampus Ontario, as well as establishing new campuses like the York University-Markham Centre, in partnership with Seneca College. This new campus will help 4,000 more students pursue their dreams closer to home.

Investing in tomorrow's workforce also includes providing support for young people to find good jobs. That's why we've launched the Youth Job Connection.

Mr. Speaker, today, only one third of Ontarians have a workplace pension plan, and that's not good enough. Our government is committed to strengthening retirement security for all Ontarians.

With proper retirement income, people can enjoy a higher standard of living, and that's why we're creating the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Together with modernizing workplace pensions, offering PRPPs and enabling other savings vehicles, we're strengthening and providing Ontarians with more availability, all of which will provide greater peace of mind.

Furthermore, Ontario has played a leadership role in advocating for CPP enhancement, and we're encouraged that it is a priority for our new federal partner.

Ontario will support a CPP enhancement that is consistent with the ORPP's objectives regarding adequacy and coverage.

But enhancing CPP would take considerable time and requires agreement from governments across the country.

In light of the pressing need to address retirement security today, Ontario will move forward with implementing the ORPP for tomorrow.

Our goal is clear: By 2020, every eligible Ontario worker would be covered by the ORPP or a comparable workplace pension plan.

All Ontarians must have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

In the budget, the government committed to supporting those most vulnerable.

That's why we have increased social assistance, indexed the minimum wage to inflation, increased funding for the Ontario Child Benefit, and provided greater support for people with disabilities to be included in the workforce. And we're not stopping there.

We're also taking steps to close the wage gap between men and women and further encourage greater equality at work and on boards.

A large part of the budget is of course health care, and we're transforming our system to ensure all Ontarians have improved access to a better and more coordinated level of care now and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, we're also taking action to combat sexual violence and harassment because, as our plan says very clearly, it's never okay.

Ontarians can be proud to live in a very progressive place. We're the first to have completely eliminated coal-fired power plants anywhere in Canada and the US. This is the single-largest greenhouse gas reduction initiative in North America. We've shown the world that bold action on climate change can be done, and good environmental policy is good economic policy.

It is why our government is committed to a cap-and-trade program with Quebec and California in the Western Climate Initiative.

We've honoured that commitment by setting greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2030 to help preserve our environment for generations to come.

In the budget of 2015, we said that proceeds from the cap-and-trade program would go toward only those priorities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As a next step, we propose \$325 million in a Green Investment Fund, a down payment to promote and create innovative solutions to reduce emissions while at the same time strengthening our economy. For example, this fund would support energy retrofits in homes and in businesses, including in our aboriginal communities.

We are home to most of Canada's clean tech businesses, operating in power generation, in transportation, in energy efficiency, in recycling and in water and waste water solutions. Indeed, for the second consecutive year, Ontario leads North America for green investments as well.

Mr. Speaker, last year we launched Canada's first-ever green bonds, and demand for the inaugural issue exceeded \$2.4 billion. It was oversubscribed. Given that program was so successful, we're pleased to be issuing a second round of Ontario green bonds before the end of March 2016.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario and our country face challenges. Overcoming them requires greater intergovernmental collaboration. These challenges cannot be tackled by one order of government alone.

Une fédération solide nécessite un partenariat solide pour bâtir une union économique encore plus solide.

Ontario, led by Premier Kathleen Wynne, is ready to work with the federal government on shared priorities such as building infrastructure, improving retirement security, tackling climate change, sustaining health care and creating new jobs.

We look forward to working collaboratively with all provinces, territories and aboriginal partners to deliver better results for all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, we, as proud and compassionate Canadians, are also welcoming those who flee persecution and oppression from other parts of the world. We will support the humanitarian efforts shared by the rest of Canada and the free world. Ontario welcomes the many children and their families fleeing devastation to find peace and safety, to make Ontario their new home.

We will be as compassionate as we are competitive. We will be as fair as we are prosperous. That balance in civil society is as important as any balance on the books.

Make no mistake: Our government is committed to balancing the books. We will balance the budget by 2017-18.

We back our commitment with a focus on controlling spending by achieving the best possible value for each and every dollar spent.

Over the last four years, the province has held average annual program spending growth to 1.4%—less than the rate of inflation.

In fact, Ontario consistently has the lowest per capita program spending among all Canadian provinces, while continuing to invest in priorities like health care and education.

The government's Program Review, Renewal and Transformation, led by Deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board Deb Matthews, is controlling spending and finding smarter ways to deliver the best possible outcomes.

Managing public sector compensation costs remains crucial to balancing the budget, since more than half of government spending goes to salaries and benefits. Our public sector partners are doing their part to offset modest increases with savings to achieve net-zero compensation agreements. The government will continue to do its part by conducting a line-by-line review of major programs to keep those costs down.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is committed to eliminating the deficit by also addressing the underground economy, to ensure everyone pays their fair share. To date, the province's achievements in combatting the underground economy have generated \$225 million more, above what was reported in the budget. This is good news for Ontario, and we have strengthened our resolve with the legislative measures to combat electronic sales suppression devices as well.

Mr. Speaker, for the last six years, Ontario has managed spending growth to offset softer revenues to beat the annual deficit target.

I am pleased to announce that the province is now projecting a lower deficit of \$7.5 billion in 2015-16, reducing further to \$4.5 billion in 2016-17 and a balanced budget in 2017-18.

We remain committed to balancing the budget in a way that is fair and responsible, and supports the vital services that Ontarians depend upon.

Our plan for building Ontario up is bold.

Take the West Don Lands.

For decades, governments hesitated to revitalize this precious waterfront. This site has now been transformed, first into the athletes' village for the most successful Pan/Parapan American Games in history.

And now as a LEED gold-designed community with over 1,000 units, including affordable and accessible housing.

This is a multi-purpose community with a student residence for George Brown College and a YMCA for families.

1350

This is a former derelict industrial area that has now been transformed into a thriving new neighbourhood where families can live and work.

It is a lasting legacy of the greatest Pan/Parapan American Games ever, and it is also an example of our vision for communities across our great province.

To make strategic investments for the benefit of generations to come.

To build roads, transit, hospitals and schools.

To partner with the private sector to create dynamic business climates to help businesses succeed.

To invest in tomorrow's workforce by helping young people gain the skills required for a knowledge-based economy.

To strengthen retirement security and to help Ontarians protect their future.

And, as well, to create those new jobs by seizing opportunities that grow our economy.

Mr. Speaker, we are embracing change.

We're making progress.

We are leading.

We're building Ontario up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We are very disappointed that the forecasted deficit of \$8.5 billion actually grew by a billion dollars. The actual deficit is now \$9.5 billion. While the government presents a rosier number, I'm going to expose how they got to that number.

I'll read from their own document, page 100: "The province's total revenue projection for 2015-16 of \$125.6 billion is \$1.2 billion higher than the 2015 budget forecast." That's accurate. "The increase largely reflects the government's progress on its asset optimization strategy related to the recent Hydro One initial public offering." Of course, Speaker, what that means is that they have

used the sale of Hydro One and put that number in revenue, the exact thing we've said they would be doing all along.

Further to that, if we look at page 99 of the budget, we know that they used \$1 billion from a reserve. This rosy number that they have projected is not accurate whatsoever when you add back the reserve number of a billion dollars and this juiced-up number because of the \$1.2 billion that they've included from the sale of Hydro One. That brings the annual deficit this year to \$9.5 billion, \$2 billion higher than the number they just presented to this very Legislature.

We've been saying this all along: That Hydro One sale money is not for transit; it has always been designed to lower their deficit, just as they did today.

This brings us back to what the Financial Accountability Officer said. Just last week or the week before, he told us that the government's revenue was going to be lower than they said, and it was; and they won't meet their spending reductions, and they didn't. The FAO, the only person we can actually listen to, in addition to the Auditor General and the OPP, was absolutely correct.

We presented documents some 18 months ago from the Ministry of Finance's own files that showed us a \$4-billion gap in their deficit reduction plan. That, of course, was confirmed by the Financial Accountability Officer's report earlier this month. He gave us the real numbers. We'll go with his numbers any day of the week.

He said the budget won't be balanced in 2017-18; rather, we'll still have a deficit between \$3.5 billion and \$7.2 billion. He told us that they will not meet their revenue numbers and they will not control their spending, and this is the result, and we saw that flat out today. We saw that the only way they could have a lower number was by selling assets, booking that in revenue and taking a billion dollars out of reserves.

We have always said in this Legislature, since day one, that this government was not selling for money to put toward transit. Rather the money was always designed to fluff up the deficit numbers. And if you'll recall, Speaker, in their very own 2014 budget they had \$130 billion listed for transit and infrastructure expenditures. It did not need the sale of Hydro. If you look closely at it, you'll see that they had \$3.1 billion of asset sales; \$1.1 billion in year one came from the sale of GM shares. You have \$1 billion in the next year, half a billion in the year after and half a billion in the year after. There was no mention—there were no numbers—that related whatsoever to the sale of Hydro. That sale of hydro was not necessary to reach the \$130 billion. Of course, in the 2015 budget, the exact same \$130 billion was announced, but all of a sudden they needed the Hydro money.

I think the Ottawa Citizen said it best. Way back in April, they pegged this; they figured it out, as we did, way back in April. "A reasonable person might wonder why we need to sell most of a significant public asset, just to keep doing what we have been doing for years. The real answer ... is that putting some billions of new money into the province's transit trust will enable the

government to quietly shift existing money to help it reduce the deficit or pay for other spending.”

Ms. Catherine Fife: For us, this statement confirms that Ontario is being set up for more sell-offs and more cuts to the people of this province. The Liberals are using the sell-off of Hydro One to cover up the fact that their plan isn't working. It's time for a fact-check for this government. Today's update shows that the government doesn't understand that the plans they put forward aren't helping families or the economy. In fact, people are falling behind.

They're reducing their growth projections, and projections for job creation are down significantly. They're showing increased revenue, but that's only because of the sell-off of Hydro One. In fact, on page 100 of their own update, they say that in black and white.

It's exactly what Ontario's independent Financial Accountability Officer showed in his report and it's what we have been saying for a long time. The FAO said that in the first year Ontario would see modest increases from selling off Hydro One but as of 2016, selling Hydro One will actually cost the province money. It will have a negative impact on revenues. And I just want to, while I have your undivided attention, remind you about that. He says that once this government sells off 60% of Ontario's Hydro One, the province stands to lose up to \$500 million a year in the long run.

This is money that could have been spent on education, on health care and on poverty reduction. Unfortunately for Ontarians, that money is as good as gone. Under this Premier's leadership, Ontario now has the most debt of any subnational government in the world. More debt means less money invested in the priorities of Ontarians. And the Financial Accountability Officer confirmed that the province's net debt will be even higher after the sell-off of Hydro One, leaving a significant burden on future generations.

That's a problem, Mr. Speaker. It's just one of the many problems that this government has on the financial record.

Of course, it's also worth noting that on the first page of this statement, the government says, “Should slower-than-expected revenue growth occur, the government will need to consider other tools to ensure that balance is achieved.” We know what that means, Mr. Speaker. It means that more public assets will be for sale. Ontario is up for sale.

For weeks now, New Democrats have asked the Premier to shut the door on selling off more assets, to tell Ontarians that they don't need to worry, that there won't be any more sell-offs. She has refused to do so. She won't shut the door. She's leaving herself room to sell more money-making assets at the expense of the people of this province. Some 80% of the people of Ontario have said to this Premier and to this government, “We do not want you to sell Hydro One.” Some 188 municipalities have passed motions asking this government not to sell Hydro One because they see it as a very poor fiscal plan. It is a money grab for now, and you are burdening future generations with debt going forward.

I think that we should be very worried, Mr. Speaker, because this government refuses to acknowledge that they have a problem. You can't address a financial or fiscal problem unless you admit that you have one. What this fall economic statement proves is that they are willing to sell off anything, including a revenue-generating asset like Hydro One, to make themselves look like they know what they're doing. It's a shameful state of affairs and it could very well create the conditions, going forward, for increased and aggressive privatization in this province.

This Premier is setting the province up for more cuts to program spending and she is setting this province up for more sell-offs of public assets. I can tell you, that is not the way you build Ontario up.

1400

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve.”

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature and given it to page Rachael.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: This petition is “End the Wait-lists for IBI/ABA Services Now.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

“Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

“Whereas estimates from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for 2015-2016 indicate that only five

more children are receiving IBI this year compared to last year and, shockingly, the number of children receiving ABA has dropped by almost 1,000 in the past two years—despite the fact that the wait-list is growing; and

“Whereas it is well known that early detection and early intervention is crucially important for children with ASD to learn to their fullest potential, and these programs set the stage for growth and development throughout children’s lives; and

“Whereas some families are being forced to remortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

“Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario immediately end the chronic wait-lists for IBI/ABA services for kids with autism spectrum disorder.”

I couldn’t agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I wish it was included in the economic statement. I’m going to give it to page Dayo to bring to the Clerk.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I have affixed my signature, as I’m in agreement, to give it to page Ben.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

“Whereas Highway 3 from Windsor to Leamington has long been identified as dangerous and unable to meet growing traffic volumes; and

“Whereas the widening of this highway passed its environmental assessment in 2006; and

“Whereas the portion of this project from Windsor to west of the town of Essex has been completed, but the remainder of the project remains stalled; and

“Whereas there has been a recent announcement of plans to rebuild the roadway, culverts, lighting and signals along the portion of Highway 3 that has not yet been widened;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To revisit plans to rebuild Highway 3 from Essex to Leamington and direct those funds to the timely completion of the already approved widening of this important roadway....”

I couldn’t agree more. There are too many accidents on that road. It’s very unsafe. I’m pleased to affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks’ table via page Ajay.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I sign my name to it as I show my support of this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to health care services, presented by the town of Huntsville and the town of Bracebridge, in support of acute-care

hospital services at both South Muskoka Memorial and Huntsville District Memorial.

"Whereas the provision of a full range of core hospital services, including acute-care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, at both the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) is vital for all of the communities in the entire MAHC catchment area, including Algonquin Provincial Park; and

"Whereas the continued delivery of those core hospital services at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital is crucial to the long-term sustainability and economic vitality of the two communities and the entire MAHC catchment area, including Algonquin Provincial Park; and

"Whereas the residents of Huntsville, Bracebridge and the other communities in the MAHC catchment area have strongly supported multi-site delivery of a full range of core hospital services, including acute-care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, at both the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge and the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital; and

"Whereas, contrary to the wishes of the people of the entire MAHC catchment area, the board of directors of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has approved the 'one-hospital model' as the preferred model for hospital service delivery in the future;

1410

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the province of Ontario ensure that a full range of core hospital services, including acute-care in-patient, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services, are maintained on a multi-site basis at both" Huntsville and Bracebridge;

"(2) That the province of Ontario ensure that the changes to Ontario's health care delivery system currently being implemented do not negatively impact access to services and the quality of care in Bracebridge, Huntsville and the entire MAHC catchment area, including Algonquin Provincial Park;

"(3) That the province of Ontario ensure that the changes to Ontario's health care delivery system currently being implemented recognize the unique and important role that smaller hospitals, such as" Huntsville and South Muskoka in Bracebridge "have in promoting economic development and creating sustainable communities in Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I support this petition, I will affix my name to it and give it to page Lauren to bring to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water." I especially want to thank Dr. Pravir Patel and his patients and staff at their Churchill Meadows office for sharing this with me. It reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

Speaker, I join with our dentists in agreeing that this is essential. I am pleased to sign and support it, and send it down with page Aminah.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M. Taras Natyshak: J'ai le plaisir d'introduire cette pétition qui dit :

« Privatiser d'Hydro One : une autre mauvaise décision...

« Attendu que la privatisation d'Hydro One est un aller sans retour; et

« Attendu que nous allons perdre des centaines de millions de revenus fiables d'Hydro One pour nos écoles et nos hôpitaux; et

« Attendu que nous allons perdre le plus gros atout économique provincial et le contrôle de notre avenir dans le secteur de l'énergie; et

« Attendu que nous allons payer de plus en plus pour l'électricité, tout comme ce qui est arrivé ailleurs;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

« D'arrêter la vente d'Hydro One et de faire en sorte que les familles de l'Ontario, comme propriétaires d'Hydro One, en bénéficient, maintenant et pour les générations à venir. »

J'appuie cette pétition, j'y affixe ma signature et je l'envoie à la table via page Aislin.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to bring a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on" my colleague "MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

It gives me great pleasure, as I agree with this petition, to affix my signature, and I give it to page Megan Faith.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time for petitions has expired.

I just want to bring to everyone's attention that there is an error on the printed order paper. Ballot item number 6 is in the name of Miss Taylor, and ballot item number 8 is in the name of Mr. Tabuns.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS

Miss Taylor moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 with respect to the disclosure of specified information relating to children and services in respect of children / Projet de loi 146, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi et la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l'Ontario en ce qui a trait à la divulgation de renseignements précisés concernant les enfants et les services à leur intention.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Miss Monique Taylor: Of course, I'm very pleased to be able to speak today to my private member's bill, the Disclosure of Information Relating to the Protection of Children Act.

I was delighted when my leader, Andrea Horwath, asked me to be the critic for children and youth services, because that's an area that is near and dear to me. The issues that arise in this portfolio are often those that demand our closest attention.

I often hear people say that governments should be run like a business. That's not the way I see it. I believe government should be run like a family. We invest in those things that will have a long-term effect for our large family. We make sure that the health and education of our family are taken care of.

The most important role of any family is the well-being of our children. In fact, any parent will tell you that they will pull out all the stops to put their children first. And, yes, while they love all of their children equally, they will also give a little bit more attention to the child who needs it. That's what families do, and that's what a government should do. We should pull out all the stops to give the help that is needed to our most vulnerable children. That is what this private member's bill is about.

1420

I am under no illusions that this bill will solve all of the problems. The workers and the agencies who deliver these services are well aware of the importance of their work and the impact that they have on the lives of children and families they serve. They do a very difficult job in an area that is chronically underfunded.

More than 6,000 children are waiting a year, on average, to begin mental health treatment. Children's aid societies' budgets have been flatlined for the past three years, and now they have to take money from those very services to pay for a new database, CPIN, and the excessive problems that we have seen. CPIN is facing excessive problems that we have seen come with every single new government database.

There are many issues, and a lot of them are related to this underfunding, but this bill is one more piece of the puzzle. By opening up a channel of communication, by offering protection to people who speak out on behalf of vulnerable children, we can only make things better.

This bill has two sections. One is amending the Employment Standards Act, and the other is amending the Public Service of Ontario Act.

The section amending the Employment Standards Act specifically refers to the duty to report provisions of the Child and Family Services Act. Section 72 of the CFSA sets out the responsibility of each person to report to a children's aid society if they suspect a child is being abused or neglected, or if they believe the child is at risk of being abused or neglected. In fact, if a person works in a professional capacity with respect to children, they are guilty of an offence if they do not make a report.

The same section of the Child and Family Services Act provides some measure of protection to those who make a report. Section 72(7) states, in part, "No action for making the report shall be instituted against a person who acts in accordance with this section." What this means when interpreted by a legal mind is that a person is protected from legal action. They are protected from liability.

With the amendment to the Employment Standards Act, all employees covered by that act, not just those working in the sector, will have the broader protection if they act under the duty to report. The passage of this bill would ensure that no employer would be allowed to intimidate, dismiss or otherwise penalize an employee for taking any actions. I think we can all agree that these provisions will help to open up the channels of communication that would make life a little bit safer for vulnerable children.

Interestingly, Speaker, as I researched for this bill, I came across section 72(1.5) of the Child and Family Services Act. What section 72(1.5) would do is protect a person who reports from dismissal, suspension, demotion, discipline, harassment, interference or being disadvantaged. I say "would" because, although section 72(1.5) was passed many years ago, it has never been proclaimed. This might be a question for another day, but I'm curious as to why that section, along with others

relating to child pornography, has never been proclaimed. Having said that, I would note that even if section 72(1.5) were proclaimed, it would still fall short of the protection offered by these amendments to the Employment Standards Act.

I want to turn now to the second part of my bill, the amendments to the Public Service of Ontario Act. Part 6 of the Public Service of Ontario Act sets out the rules and process for disclosing and investigating wrongdoing. It includes protection from reprisal for making such a disclosure.

That is what is commonly called "whistle-blower protection." It has been defined as "the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action." So it is broadly perceived as an important tool by giving protection to those who report wrongdoing and serves in the public's best interest.

In the 2012 report by the OECD, they had this to say: "Public and private sector employees have access to up-to-date information concerning their workplaces' practices, and are usually the first to recognize wrongdoings...."

"Whistleblower protection is therefore essential to encourage the reporting of misconduct, fraud and corruption. Providing effective protection for whistleblowers supports an open, organizational culture where employees are not only aware of how to report but also have confidence in the reporting procedures."

That's why whistleblower protection is included in the Public Service of Ontario Act: because we recognize the value of the public's interest of having it there. As we strive to offer the best possible protection for Ontario's most vulnerable children and to provide the best possible service to them, I believe that whistleblower protection is an important element of the structures we want to build by meeting these goals.

The problem is that the children's aid and transfer payment agencies that provide services under the Child and Family Services Act are not covered by the Public Service of Ontario Act. Despite the fact that they are funded, if not exclusively, to a very high degree, by the government and despite the fact that their work is directed by the government through the Child and Family Services Act and associated regulations, those agencies are neither part of the ministry nor are they public bodies as defined by the Public Service of Ontario Act. As such, people who work in these agencies, despite the fact that they deliver critical public services, are not considered public servants.

The relevant regulation lists 167 public bodies, and they include, for example, the Advisory Council to the Order of Ontario, the Niagara Parks Commission, the Owen Sound Transportation Co., and the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission. I don't doubt that the 167 bodies do excellent work for people in the service of Ontarians, and I certainly do not suggest that they shouldn't be covered by this legislation, but I do wonder

why agencies that are responsible for the welfare of our most vulnerable children are not covered.

These are agencies that we entrust to make sure our children are protected from harm, who deliver essential mental health services, who provide developmental services, who operate group homes and youth corrections. If you go back to my earlier analogy that compared the work of government to that of a family, they perform perhaps the most crucial role of government: What type of family would not pull out all the stops for their struggling child? What type of government would not pull out all the stops to look after our most vulnerable children? We owe it to these children to put in place all the tools that we can to further their well-being.

This bill will provide whistleblower protection to those who work in those agencies. It amends the Public Service of Ontario Act so that those who provide child and family services are covered by the same whistleblower protection as public servants. In fact, it makes them public servants for part VI, the whistleblowing part, and only part VI, and it makes the agencies and societies public bodies for that part of the act.

For the further benefit of vulnerable children, my bill also amends the protection from reprisals section of part VI of the Public Service of Ontario Act. The intent of this amendment is that reprisals cannot be taken against any public servant who communicates about or makes a disclosure specifically to the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. This amendment flows from the provincial advocate's submission to the hearings on Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, in November of last year. From that submission, recommendation 14 states:

"Whistleblowing: The provincial advocate requests this Legislature to enact legislation extending whistleblower protection to those employees not covered by the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006, where a disclosure is made to the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth involving a risk of harm to children and youth within its mandate." Today, we all have the opportunity to make some way toward that request for the provincial advocate.

Children deserve to have more people speaking out on their behalf. Workers who do so deserve to be protected. We need to put in place whatever tools we can to make sure the channels of communication are open. I thank you for your time, and I ask all members to support this bill.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: First, I would like to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for bringing this bill forward in this Legislature.

J'ai le plaisir d'être ici aujourd'hui pour discuter ce projet de loi au nom de ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans.

Mr. Speaker, children and youth receiving services from children's aid societies are some of the most

vulnerable in our province, and our government is firmly committed to supporting a child welfare system that protects them.

I'm actually quite familiar with the challenges associated with children's aid. Just a few years ago—not saying exactly how long, Mr. Speaker—after studying social work, I began my career with the children's aid society in Ottawa. I saw first-hand the impact that government can have in protecting our youth and vulnerable children.

Je comprends le désir de modifier notre législation pour mieux aider les enfants et les jeunes dans notre province.

All of us in this House believe that children are our future, and we must always protect those who may not be in a position to protect themselves.

La Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille est un outil important pour soutenir notre système d'allocations.

Under this act, all Ontarians are required to report to a children's aid society if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection. This means that all Ontarians have a legal duty to report. Under the Child and Family Services Act, a person who reports suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect is protected from liability, unless that person acts maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the suspicions.

Mr. Speaker, our government understands the issues that the member for Hamilton Mountain is addressing in her bill, and our government is working hard to support our children's aid societies. The Ontario government realizes that it is important to allow full support for these workers who devote their lives to caring for Ontario's vulnerable children and youth. That is why we have taken on many initiatives with this in mind.

To increase awareness and understanding of the duty to report suspected cases of children abuse and/or neglect, the Minister of Children and Youth Services launched a public education campaign last month to coincide with Child Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario. Furthermore, we have been vocal in our support of a high-quality, consistent and sustainable child welfare system. As many in this House may remember, including the member opposite, in April 2013, we introduced a new approach to accountability that includes the collection and public reporting of performance indicators, clear expectations regarding children's aid society performance and accountability agreements.

We have supported legislation that established the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, to provide an independent voice for all children. This office is accountable directly to the Legislature and provides this House with reports and recommendations. The creation of this office is an important step in continuing to protect our vulnerable children and youth. Ever since the creation of this independent office, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services has worked closely with the office of the provincial advocate.

We recognize the important contributions that the provincial advocate makes to elevate the voice of chil-

dren and youth. As a former social worker in this field, I could not be more proud of the steps we have taken.

This office has the authority to advocate for children and youth receiving services under the CFSA by receiving and responding to complaints, conducting reviews, representing the views and preferences of children and youth, making reports and providing recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to help protect these children. Last year, this Legislature passed an amendment to the advocate's legislation which provides the advocate with the authority to investigate matters relating to children and youth involved in the child protection system.

We are expanding the authority of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and I know all members in this House will agree this is a good thing. I know that next year, when the changes take effect for the advocate, he will use his significant new investigative powers to further strengthen the oversight of the child protection system by providing an important new function for the benefit of our most vulnerable children and youth.

Our government is working tirelessly to help those children and youth who are vulnerable. We've established an independent advocate and enhanced his powers. Our minister and this government will continue to work for those who cannot protect themselves. For all of us in this House, protecting our youth and children is a goal I would say we all share.

In closing, I would like to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain and all in this House for their work in advocating and advancing the protection of our children and our vulnerable youth.

It gives me great pleasure to stand for this on behalf of me, as an MPP for Ottawa-Orléans and as a former social worker working for the children's aid society.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 146. I commend the member from Hamilton Mountain for putting forward this piece of legislation. She is very passionate when she speaks in the Legislature about many, many things, but you could especially sense the passion in her voice when speaking about this very important issue to her and her community. It is important to all of us on both sides of the Legislature, making sure that we are looking after and providing the safeguards for our children in our communities.

I have had the opportunity not to work necessarily with children or as a social worker, but I have had the opportunity to support the Quinte Children's Foundation, which is the charitable branch of the Highland Shores Children's Aid society. I guess they're not going by the "Quinte Children's Foundation" anymore; they are just going by the "Children's Foundation," because they have branched out to include Northumberland county as well. Northumberland county, Hastings county and Prince Edward county are all part of the Children's Foundation which looks out for children in our community, many of

them wards of the CAS, but many of them just children from low-income families who need help to participate in sporting activities or the arts or, you know, anything outside of the school setting.

We have many, many people in our community who have been active in helping out the Children's Foundation. There's a really neat event every year in the spring, I believe it is, the Guardian Angel Gala, where we celebrate the contributions of local people in our community in protecting children in our community, raising funds for children, being philanthropists in this sector. I'm very happy to say that very good friends of mine are receiving their wings very soon, as they have been named guardian angels. This is an event that occurs once a year in our community, and Heather and John Williams will be receiving their wings. I'd like to publicly congratulate them for being so important to protecting our children across the Quinte region. John is the former mayor of the city of Quinte West, and Heather is a nutritionist in the area. They have been wonderful philanthropists and leading the charge to ensure that we provide a safe environment for our children in the Quinte region.

As for the bill that's been brought forward by the member for Hamilton Mountain, as the father of two young girls, Payton and Reagan, there's nothing more important to me in this world than the safety and protection of my children and children right across the province. I've had the opportunity to be a hockey coach and a soccer coach and a baseball coach, and to go into the schools and speak to children, as I'm sure a lot of my colleagues do now, about—well, previously it was broadcasting; now it's about politics, in the grade 5 civics classes. I enjoy spending time with children because they are so important to the future of our province, obviously.

1440

Bill 146, the Disclosure of Information Relating to the Protection of Children Act: It's an important bill that will help protect those who do their due diligence and report any form of child abuse. By protecting the legal rights of employees to not be threatened, intimidated, dismissed or penalized when reporting child abuse, we can protect and ensure that, under all cases, those people who suspect or are witness to child abuse will feel safe and secure to report any such incidents. Although many companies already include HR policies that protect employees from reprimand or termination when they report incidences such as these, this bill creates the legislative framework so that these policies are guaranteed for everyone across Ontario.

When someone intentionally hurts a child, physically or otherwise, they're committing one of the most heinous crimes that can occur in society. It's imperative, therefore, that no barriers stand between those who witness or suspect child abuse and those picking up a form and reporting it to the authorities. Ensuring that the employment rights of those who report are protected will help eliminate some of those barriers that anyone may face when reporting instances of child abuse.

Now, I did speak to some people at the Highland Shores Children's Aid society in my region, Mr. Speaker,

and when speaking to some of those representatives from my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings, there were a couple of outstanding concerns as to some of the language included in the bill. So, a question: Does the bill include staff of children's aid societies as part of the public service, or does it mean to allow them to remain as they are, as part of the public sector in the province? My constituent flagged some important spin-off implications that this could potentially raise for the children's aid societies that would go beyond just this bill, but I'm sure that these types of discussions will occur at committee, where each legislative implication can be examined a little more closely under the scrutiny of the committee environment.

Notwithstanding that, the children of this province are its future, and it's our duty as members of the Legislature to ensure that their right to grow up in a safe and carefree environment, free from the horrors of child abuse or any other harm, can happen here in Ontario. This bill, by making sure that those who report child abuse are protected, is helping this province catch those who perpetrate these despicable acts and make sure that they're caught and persecuted.

Again, I would like to congratulate the member from Hamilton Mountain. I support her today. This is why I, as a father and a member of the provincial Legislature, will be supporting Bill 146.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a real honour to stand here today to speak to my colleague and seatmate's bill, Bill 146, the Disclosure of Information Relating to the Protection of Children Act. The member from Hamilton Mountain, whom I've had the privilege of sitting next to since I was first elected—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Very passionate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, Minister. It has been an incredible privilege, as you know. Our colleague here is one of the most passionate voices when it comes specifically to the issue of the protection of children. We all dedicate our efforts in this place, but I don't think anyone is as singularly focused on that issue as she has been. Again, it's an honour to watch her focus even more energy today, with the introduction of this bill, on identifying where we as legislators can apply our efforts to make the system better. This is indeed one of those bills.

Speaker, she has done this in the past. She has dedicated her private member slots to extending, or hoping to extend, Ombudsman oversight on the children's aid societies and other sectors. Unfortunately, the government has not seen fit to move that along, as much as it may be required even more so today than ever. However, this has not deterred her from pressing on and continuing to find and identify gaps in the system.

Today's bill, Bill 146, is something that in its mechanics, is quite logical and quite reasonable, something that we should pass swiftly here, and also be able to pass swiftly at committee.

I listened to my colleague from—Todd, where's your—

Mr. Todd Smith: Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —Prince Edward–Hastings, who raised the question about the language regarding whether CAS officials would be public sector now, or public service. Indeed, for the sake of this bill, and through the provisions of the whistle-blower protection only, they would be public sector workers and would have no ramifications—I assume, Speaker, the member was referring to potential contractual or negotiated labour implications. This wouldn't touch that. It's just for the sake of protecting them under the law, through the whistle-blower protections, because currently they don't have that, as public sector workers currently do. Now it's treating them the same way. That's what I'm talking about when I say the mechanics of the bill.

Why wouldn't we want to do that? Why wouldn't we want to bring all of those who deal directly with kids in our communities under the umbrella, under that protective cloak, to ensure that they have the freedom and the resources to be able to identify the gaps and identify where children are potentially being harmed? Not only that, but the gaps in the service, the gaps in the delivery of those protections where agencies and potential employees of those agencies are failing in their duties to protect those children. It's not meant to shame anyone but to ensure that everyone is doing their job, and that those who aren't, those who are negligent in providing that safety and the services, are held to account and that there are some mechanisms to call them to account.

Again, on a day-to-day, routine basis here around this place, there are so many different aspects of the law that we have to consider. One that, frankly, I never even knew existed—that small, minute gap in coverage of the law that we can do here quite quickly to ensure that we are protecting all of those who want to do their job effectively. Ultimately through this minor change—which I see as a minor change; it only has two schedule changes to it—we protect kids.

I've considered the job that we do here every day, considered my role and our role, collectively, and the various things that we deal with. At the end of the day, our primary role is public safety; it is. We can talk about economics. We can talk about various government ministries and agencies and other functions of the provincial government, but, at the end of the day, our primary goal is to ensure that the protection of the public is paramount. This is again one mechanism where we can do that.

I am supremely proud to see the efforts of my colleague the member from Hamilton Mountain come to fruition. She puts a lot of thought into her bills. She puts in a lot of effort and consultation. I know she's connecting with stakeholders on a continuous basis. I can tell you, as her colleague and as her friend, she puts her heart into these bills. Knowing that she has done that and continues to do that, it certainly is going to be an endeavour that we can all be proud of supporting—and see it work its way through the process here in the Legislature, ultimately, for the benefit of kids in our province.

I thank you very much, Speaker, for your time, and I appreciate the attention of my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm pleased to rise in the House today and join my colleagues from Essex and from Prince Edward–Hastings to speak to a very important issue. I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain, who, as the member from Essex noted, is an incredibly passionate member. She, indeed, is a strong advocate for children and their protection. Congratulations for doing this.

It's an unfortunate reality that there are children in Ontario who are the victims of abuse or neglect and are in need of protection. If I may, Speaker, if the House will indulge me, I'd like to acknowledge the work of my brother John and his wife Lise who are constituents in the member opposite's riding of Essex. They are foster parents. They deal with children who are amongst the most challenged in terms of being crown wards. I laud them for their compassion and for their incredible—

Applause.

1450

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you. I am in awe of their contributions, Speaker, and I know, indeed, that they have saved lives through their work.

These children are almost always unable to speak for themselves, so it falls to others in our communities to speak for them and report cases to authorities where they believe a child is in danger. This is not just an obligation; it is the right thing to do. And making sure that those individuals who do report cases are protected from negative consequences is also the right thing.

Our government is firmly committed to this, and to supporting a welfare system that protects children and those who act on their behalf. That is why, in April 2013, we introduced a new approach to accountability, including the collection and public reporting of performance indicators, clear expectations regarding children's aid societies' performance and accountability agreements.

Children's aid societies are on the front line. They deal with child abuse and neglect. This year is the 100th anniversary of the Halton Children's Aid Society in my riding. It has an office in Burlington, and 81% of the Halton Children's Aid Society's protection workers are co-located within the community.

When these workers are out in our community, it would be an absolute shame that people would feel as though they could not approach them—their neighbours and their friends—because they have a fear of being reprimanded for something that is noble, just and simply our duty to do as human beings.

Over the past 100 years, Halton CAS has been doing such noble work. However, they simply cannot do this on their own. Over the past year, the Halton Children's Aid Society, which cares for residents of Burlington, had a 13% increase in investigations at intake. Their ongoing cases, at over 300, remain at what is considered a high

level, and the number of children in their care increased when they expected a reduction.

They expected a 30% growth in cases before the court, and even with the addition of four front-line staff in community protection, their workload increased. There's no question that they and other aid societies across our province are busy and remain committed to protecting children.

Their increased workload is a sign that people are reporting, and that's a good thing. But there is a need to ensure that the voices of those who know of wrongdoings are heard. Social workers alone cannot deal with the hideous problem of child abuse. Those who wish to assist in this noble cause deserve protection in every capacity. It is our job as public servants to ensure that we protect them.

Currently, the Child and Family Services Act requires all Ontarians to report to a children's aid society if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child is or may be facing danger and is in need of protection. This means that we all have a duty to report, and the CFSA provides protection from liability to individuals who do so, provided that they did not do so without reasonable grounds, or with malice.

Our government understands that this is also an issue of awareness. A study published by the Canadian Medical Association Journal, which made national news, found that 32% of Canadians had experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, exposure to intimate partner violence or a combination of these when they were young, including behaviour once deemed socially appropriate, like spanking and slapping.

These statistics underscore the fact that we need to make the public aware that this problem exists and is far more common than people realize. That is why the Ministry of Children and Youth Services launched a public education campaign just last month to coincide with Child Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario, to help Ontarians understand the scope of these problems and help them to understand the complexity of the issues.

We have also consistently supported enhancing our child welfare system, including legislation that requires more rigorous background checks for individuals offering to provide care for children receiving CAS services, and to establish the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. We've increased the mandate and powers of the Child and Family Services Review Board, so they may independently review complaints related to CASs, as well as certain decisions of societies and adoption licensees.

Ultimately, I will absolutely be supporting this bill today, and I hope that all colleagues in the House do the same. While the types of protections put forth in this legislation may exist in some form, I wholeheartedly support the intention of this bill in adding further protection to those in our communities who act in the defence of our most precious resource, our children.

I'd like to thank again the member for Hamilton Mountain for bringing forth this very important bill, for

starting this conversation and for acting, as she always does, on behalf of vulnerable children in Ontario.

As the member for Essex noted, with this legislation it is our job, and even our moral obligation, to look after those in our province who need it most.

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and offer a few brief remarks. Like the member for Hamilton Mountain, I was first elected back in 2011. I remember that back in 2012 the member introduced Bill 110, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to children's aid societies, which aimed to give full investigative power to the Ombudsman in relation to decisions made by children's aid societies.

Unfortunately, that bill died when the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, resigned at the height of the gas plant scandal and prorogued the Legislature.

She then reintroduced the bill, this time as Bill 42, in 2013. Our caucus, I'm proud to say, supported that bill through second reading, despite efforts by the government to vote the bill down.

All of this is to say that the member for Hamilton Mountain is no stranger to advocating on behalf of children and youth, especially when it comes to our province's children's aid societies. It was hardly a surprise to see that the member now has tabled another bill with the same theme, Bill 146, the Disclosure of Information Relating to the Protection of Children Act, 2015. The bill seeks to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006, to protect employees against reprisal when reporting concerns about a service or a child to the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

Everyone is currently free to speak out on behalf of children and every citizen of this province is able to take steps to report a suspicion that a child is in need of protection. However, not all employees are protected from retaliation from their employers about what they report. Surely, there have been examples of concerns that were never raised for fear of getting into trouble at the workplace. Speaker, I think that's just tragic.

Bill 146 sets out to provide protection for an employee against retaliation in situations where the employee takes steps to report a suspicion that a child is in need of protection. The bill establishes a scheme under which public servants may disclose wrongdoing and sets out that specified persons who perform professional or official duties with respect to children, including every employee, director, officer, member or sole proprietor of a child and family service provider, are all public servants for the purposes of this bill. This effectively means that the bill would extend whistle-blower protection to those speaking out on behalf of children who may be harmed or at risk of being harmed.

Earlier this week, I spoke to a couple of children's aid societies. One saw the reason for the changes that this legislation proposes. Currently, under the Child and

Family Services Act, anyone who believes a child is in need of protection must report it immediately to the children's aid society. The Child and Family Services Act also states that no person shall disclose the identity of an informant and that "no person shall dismiss, suspend, demote, discipline, harass, interfere with or otherwise disadvantage an informant under this section. Speaker, this bill is not that much different from what Bill 146 had set out. I look forward to the member addressing some of the confusion that is out there about the bill.

I do support the intent of the bill, as we need to ensure that every individual is protected when it comes to reporting a suspicion of child abuse, but from what I can see, this bill is simply making minor adjustments rather than substantive changes—but that's all right. She's moving in the right direction.

I'm not the only one who is supportive of this bill. Irwin Elman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, spoke strongly in favour of the bill and said the following:

"Children under the mandate of our office are the most vulnerable and silenced in the province. There are times in which they require supportive adults to stand with them. This bill is about protecting vulnerable children and creating a culture in this province where a child's voice can be heard and where individuals seeking to amplify that voice can come forward without fearing reprisal from their employer."

The bill is about protecting those who protect our children. This is something I endorse wholeheartedly.

1500

I think everyone here believes that we all have a duty to ensure our province's children and youth are safe. As part of our duty as legislators, we should be striving to bring forward legislation that will, in fact, improve and protect the lives of our province's children and youth. As a father and, recently, a grandfather, nothing is more important than protecting our children.

I've been involved in a lot of sports over my years at the coaching level. I've coached various levels of youth baseball and hockey, sponsoring soccer—followed my three children through their youth. I also taught a program in the high schools entitled Success Strategies for Youth, an eight-week program aimed at further developing the self-confidence and improving the self-esteem of young people today, most of whom sometimes have been abused at some point in time in their lives. So they deal with it.

It's again an honour. I truly support this bill at second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House, and today especially so because we're talking about a bill that has an impact on at-risk children. It has an impact on at-risk children, and it also has an incredible impact on the people who work to take care of those kids, because it's a very stressful job.

Before I get too far in my five minutes, I would like to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for bringing this bill forward. At our caucus table and in this House, she is always, always a very strong voice for those who can't speak for themselves. I think that's the best way to describe it. Often, we'll be discussing something and she will go, "Oh, wait a second. You forgot about that." We really appreciate that.

Everyone has something that they're very interested in. The member from Hamilton Mountain is very, very passionate about children, about people who don't have a voice. They couldn't have a better voice than the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Getting back to the bill: This isn't an earth-shattering change. This is one of those bills that—if this is passed, as it should be—is offering protection to public servants who, right now, according to the way legislation is written, although they are public servants, they're not public servants. For those people who don't spend a lot of time watching how legislation is created, it's a lot like—I'm from a farm background—making sausage. When you're making sausage, sometimes you forget some ingredients and you think everything is fine, but it's not. That's what this bill is.

People in the public service, in the direct public service, who are directly paid for by the government, are currently covered by whistle-blower protection. What this bill aims to correct is that people who are paid by the government, but at arm's length—when the money is transferred to another agency, they're still, in the eyes of the public, a public servant, but in the eyes of government whistle-blower protection, they're not. That creates a huge problem, because a person who isn't protected could have knowledge of a child who is being abused or neglected, but because of the fact that they aren't protected if they bring that knowledge forward, they might be reluctant to do so. And someone says, "Oh, that never happens. I would never do that." But you know what? Having been in situations where you have to risk your job for something that may or may not be fixed, it's a hard decision to make.

If we could take this opportunity and extend whistle-blower protection to those people—because it exists for a direct public servant. I don't know if that's the correct term, Mr. Speaker, but if you're directly paid by the Ontario government, you are protected by whistle-blower protection. But if you're paid by an agency which is funded by the Ontario government, you're not. Now, I'm sure that doesn't make sense to the people out there. Until the member from Hamilton Mountain explained it to our caucus, it didn't make sense to us either that this wasn't happening now. Now the case that we're trying to make to the other members in this House is that it's something that can be fixed easily.

We are in the business of making laws, making them better and hopefully not making them worse. This is definitely a case where we would be making the laws of this province better to protect not only the children but the people who work in those jobs.

I know people who work in some of those agencies. They face some incredible stresses and incredible pressures. They deal with issues that most of us will never see and that most of us would never be able to deal with. The very least we can do for those people is to make sure that when they see an issue that no one should see, that they are protected if they bring it forward.

One thing in this bill about when someone brings something forward to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth—is that their name?

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes.

Mr. John Vanthof: I think that's a very important part that should be mentioned because the child advocate, as an independent officer of this House, is a very powerful position and a position that shouldn't be taken lightly. The fact is that if you make information available to the child advocate, you are protected if you are an indirect public servant. I think that should be stressed, because the child advocate plays a very important role in this province. Anything that we can do to shed more light to help him or her—whoever happens to be appointed, but right now it's a him—help children, we should take that advantage.

It's very frustrating in this House when you see things that could be done very quickly, and they lag for years. I hope that this isn't the case with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member from Hamilton Mountain. You have two minutes for a response.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the members who had some input into this bill, Bill 146: the member from Ottawa-Orléans; the member from Prince Edward-Hastings; my seatmate, the member from Essex; the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane; the member from Burlington; and the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Some good points were made in the House today. The members from the government side talked about the things that were being implemented already: the protection indicators and the public education. We all welcome those tools to be available to protection workers and to people across this province to ensure that our children are safe.

The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex said that this is really just a minor change. He's absolutely right. It's a minor change that could make a huge difference in regard to a person taking the chance, without fear of reprisal of their job if they make a complaint and something is being shuffled under the carpet and could create damage to a child, to the industry or to the sector.

You know that that person is going to be able to feel safe about the right thing to do. That's really what it's about: giving people the ability to do the right thing in regard to the safety and well-being of our children, which I know is always front and centre of any debate in this House, that it's always in the best interests of a child. That's really what this bill comes down to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' business.

1510

SMOKE-FREE SCHOOLS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 FAVORISANT DES ÉCOLES SANS FUMÉE

Mr. Smith moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the Tobacco Tax Act / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée et la Loi de la taxe sur le tabac.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thanks very much, Speaker. This bill, like the previous bill, has a lot to do with protecting kids, and it also has to do with cracking down on criminal activity; in particular, organized crime that is rampant in Ontario. Today, I'm rising on a matter for which I hope we have a common cause in the Legislature.

In December 1952, way back when, Reader's Digest published *Cancer by the Carton*, the first true journalistic exposé of the health effects of smoking. In the 63 years since, legislators in countries around the world have tried actively to lower smoking rates across the board. Measures have been brought in to raise taxes, limit production, ensure information was provided about health effects on the packaging, and even limit marketing and advertising displays.

We have had some successes. We have evolved from a society where four in five doctors smoked somebody's brand to a society where a cigarette company can't even sponsor a fireworks show. We have evolved from a situation where kids knew their parents' brand to kids whose parents never had a brand. For those successes, I'd like to extend congratulations to some of the people who sponsored the legislation that I'm bringing forward today.

We have a couple of them in the Legislature, actually. Greg Killough—first of all, I would like to give a lot of thanks to Greg from the Heart and Stroke Foundation. We've worked very closely with him. Nadia Formigoni is here from Heart and Stroke today. We welcome her. Kelly Gorman from the Canadian Cancer Society and Canadian Cancer Society youth volunteer Shadi Mousavi Nia—is that pretty good? Pretty good. We welcome them here today. They have been sponsors of this particular legislation.

Folks at the Canadian Cancer Society and the Heart and Stroke Foundation have worked tirelessly for years to bring down the rates of smoking in this province, but for many people, the rates of youth smoking in this province still remain way too high. What we know, from studies conducted by groups like Tobacco-Free Kids, is that 80% of adult smokers have had their first cigarette

before they turned 18. We know that the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health says that 43% of all cigarettes consumed by Ontario high schoolers are contraband, and 50% of high school smokers will have at least one cigarette a day. The reason why we're having trouble making further dents in the smoking rate among both young people and adults is contraband tobacco. That's the reason. So let's do something about it.

The reason that I think we can seek common cause here is because the government has continually said it wants to do something on this file. The actions taken, however, have been insufficient so far to the size of the problem. It's not just an Ontario problem anymore. We've got cigarettes from Hamilton making up almost half the contraband seized in Atlantic Canada, and contraband cigarettes from Norfolk county being sold in places like Mexico, Guatemala and Costa Rica.

But I also need to address some of the things being said about this bill. First, fines are being increased on those who transport, manufacture and distribute illegal tobacco. The reason for this is that fines are supposed to be a disincentive to illegal activity, as well as a punitive measure for those who break the law. But most of the fines that we had, particularly on the transportation and distribution side, failed to live up to the first objective. Illegal tobacco is big, big business, and it should be fined the way that big business is fined when it breaks the law.

One of the concerns is that the bill will cause you to lose your car if you transport illegal tobacco in bulk. The Tobacco Tax Act already grants police those powers. In order to be deemed to be transporting tobacco in bulk, you have to be transporting a lot of cigarettes. As a matter of fact, in the Tobacco Tax Act, you have to be transporting 10,000 cigarettes, or roughly 50 cartons. That's the size of what is called a master case of cigarettes, so that's a lot of cigarettes.

As a matter of perspective, in three different busts that occurred last year, police seized 107 cases, 463 bags and 182 garbage bags full of cigarettes. This isn't targeted at anyone buying cigarettes for their personal use. That's a whack of cigarettes, Mr. Speaker. This is aimed at people who traffic in this poison.

Unfortunately, we have too many of those people. When it comes to marketing and promoting their product, people who traffic in illegal tobacco are working in the Wild West right now, and that's the scary part. You can be trying to sell an illegal product with some pretty nasty ingredients in it—like even animal feces, which has been reported—while telling a group of high school kids that your product is natural. So this bill has a public education portion in it as well that seeks to educate kids about the dangers of any tobacco, but also with a particular focus on illegal tobacco and the dangers around its consumption.

A part of this bill that has gotten considerable attention is the ability of the government to take your driver's licence as well if you're caught transporting illegal tobacco in bulk. Previously, the Tobacco Tax Act allowed for that as a possible punishment. This just makes

it a mandatory punishment. You will lose your licence if you're caught transporting illegal tobacco in bulk. On a first offence, you can lose your licence for up to six months; on a second offence, it's up to a year.

What we know from comprehensive health studies is that we're talking about a product, in illegal tobacco, that overwhelmingly markets to kids and overwhelmingly markets to people with lower incomes. We know that we've got organizations in Ontario that have widespread distribution and are trafficking in these illegal cigarettes outside of our provincial jurisdiction and even outside of the continent. When you look at it that way, taking away their licence hardly seems like an unjustified measure.

I had a gentleman tell me just the other day that, a few years back, he was offered \$30,000 just to drive a truck to Montreal and back—\$30,000, he was offered, to drive a truck to Montreal and back. So it is happening.

The bill would allow the Minister of Finance the ability to share the proceeds of seizures made in these types of investigations with the police departments who are conducting the investigations.

In 2014, an RCMP report on the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy stated the following: "In the short to middle term, the involvement of organized crime groups in importing, manufacturing and distributing contraband is expected to remain stable due to the low risks and potential for large profits.... The availability of tobacco materials, and access to industrial machinery as well as means of transportation, may entice organized crime groups to invest additional human and financial resources in order to tighten control over this criminal market, particularly in central Canada."

What we know from many of the illegal tobacco busts made in this province is that we're often not only confiscating tobacco, but guns and drugs are being confiscated as well.

This is far from a victimless crime. A lot of the people doing the distributing in this province are pushing a lot of different brands of illegal cigarettes. This is just another one that we can use to catch them.

Central Canada is the source of much of the illegal tobacco problem across the country. Almost all of Canada's tobacco is actually grown right here in Ontario. As long as we have an illegal tobacco problem, the whole continent will have an illegal tobacco problem.

When Quebec enacted measures like this under the Charest government in 2009, it led to a 60% decrease in their youth smoking rate. So this isn't a new idea; this was introduced in 2009 by the government of Quebec, the Jean Charest government. As I say, their youth smoking rate went down by 60%, almost entirely because of this legislation. That's an important statistic, because this is more than a health problem and it's more than a law enforcement problem. It's a cost problem.

As I said earlier, we know that 80% of adult smokers had picked up the habit before the age of 18. We know, and have known for years, that smoking is tied to increased rates of lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, emphysema and countless other chronic illnesses. The

estimated cost for treating these diseases is billions and billions, and it's billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, that can be prevented. It's billions of dollars that could be going to some other part of our health care system.

The way we make sure that money doesn't go to something that can be prevented is by cracking down on the guys who are pushing the illegal products in the first place.

It's not just a health problem; it's a health care problem. It's surgery hours, hospital beds, chemotherapy treatments, pharmacare costs. The tragic part is that all of this is preventable. If we don't stop it—if we don't treat it like it's a law enforcement problem, if we don't start putting the guys who push this poison out of business, they will put us out of business.

1520

After you talk about the health care portion of what illegal tobacco does, it almost seems kind of trivial to talk about what it does to the economy and finances of the province. But, once again, we're talking about billions. As much as \$1.1 billion is lost annually to the provincial treasury because of illegal cigarettes.

We all want schools, hospitals, roads and infrastructure. When you take \$1.1 billion out of the excise every year, you have a long-term cash problem that impacts your ability to pay for those schools, hospitals, roads and infrastructure.

The government said in its budget last year that it has tried to take further measures in the large omnibus bill that's currently before the House to deal with this issue. It's done so largely by attacking the raw leaf problem. There's no doubt that we do have a raw leaf problem in Ontario. We've got people who grow tobacco in this province letting some slip out the back door in the middle of the night, or fall off trucks. I can understand the government's point: If we cut off the supply, we create a big problem for those who are involved in this illegal distribution. But our responsibility has to extend further down the supply chain, because we're not going to always be able to make the stop at the first link in the supply chain.

The overwhelming majority—70% of the problem—is cigarettes, cigarillos and cigars. We can't address the illegal tobacco problem without attacking that side of it. These products are being moved across our province daily in a very organized, sophisticated fashion. It's the illegal movement of these products across Ontario, into and out of this jurisdiction, that are costing us billions in health care, costing us billions in lost revenue and making our kids pick up a habit that they shouldn't be introduced to in the first place.

In conclusion, it's my hope that members from all sides will support this bill today, and that we can get the Smoke-Free Schools Act to committee for further debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls.

As most of us know, my colleague, my fellow MPP from Nickel Belt and our health critic, has done excellent

work as a champion for reducing tobacco use among young people. In particular, her work to ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products in order to stop the marketing of tobacco to children has been a pleasure to behold.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to see this House taking further action to reduce tobacco use among young people. This is a serious health issue facing our province, and it's great to see proactive measures being taken to address this problem.

According to a 2013 Youth Smoking Survey conducted by Health Canada and the University of Waterloo—think about this, my colleagues who are here today—21% of young kids have tried smoking. One in five young people is picking up a cigarette. That is far too many young people exposing themselves to the risks of smoking, and I'm happy—I know my colleagues will like to hear this—to support a bill that should help reduce those numbers.

It has long been clear that one of the easiest measures we can take to help to prevent our young people from starting to smoke is also one that can be very effective. I'm speaking, of course, about the education programs to reduce tobacco use. Not only have these programs been effective here in Ontario, they've also been effective on a national, and even a global, scale. The reason for their effectiveness is quite simple: When people understand the harm that smoking causes to their bodies, as well as the harm it causes to those around them, they become less likely to start smoking. Mr. Speaker, that is why it is important for this bill to have a mandate for the government to establish a public education program about the health risks associated with the use of tobacco, because it is effective. This will help us be able to ensure that our children and grandchildren grow up and become the next generation of non-smokers and do not have to deal with the health problems that come, unfortunately, from smoking.

It's critical that we do not allow our children to start smoking. I have three daughters myself—Jacqueline, Tara-Lynn and Chantel—as well as five grandkids. I know from personal experience the horrors of smoking. My mother smoked her entire life, and, in the end, that's what killed her. When she had the first half of her lung removed because of lung cancer, the doctors told her to quit or she would die, but she couldn't. Then, when she had half of her other lung removed, the doctor told her the same thing, and despite her entire family, myself included, begging my mother to quit, she couldn't do it. And in the end, it was the cigarettes that caused the lung cancer that killed my mother at the age of 61.

Now every time I look at my own daughters and my grandkids, I know just how important it is to make sure they never start—because if you watch the advertising that goes on and you watch the ads on TV, it's geared to young people, how exciting it is. We have got to make sure they never start, because once they start, it's almost impossible to quit.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to add a little part to that story. I think it's important to put a face to it.

I never smoked. There's a couple of reasons why I didn't smoke. I actually thought I was a pretty good goaltender and I was going to make the NHL. In my time, we had small goalies: Gump Worsley, Mike Vernon—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Rogie Vachon.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Rogie Vachon.

But the other reason why I never smoked—and it was interesting what stuck in my mind, because we talk about educating our young people. I was always told that if you smoked, it would stunt your growth, so I'd probably be about four feet tall if I smoked. That's one of the reasons why I never took up smoking.

All that being said, I do support your bill. I also believe there are issues around the bill that we need to have addressed at committee.

First—I would really like my colleague to listen—and this is something that we need to address every time we discuss legislation governing the use of tobacco: What impact will this have on our First Nations people? It's critical for everyone in this House to recognize that tobacco has an important history for the First Nations people of our province. Many of their traditional ceremonies and practices involve the use of tobacco, and we must not infringe on those practices. Mr. Speaker, there's only one true way that we can ensure that the rights of First Nations people are fully respected, and we have to listen to them. We need to have full hearings at committee where First Nations peoples of this province can come and make their voices heard on this very, very important issue for their communities.

That's not the only reason it's very important for this bill to have full hearings before a committee. There are other important aspects of this bill that need to be examined very closely.

Another part of this bill that we need to examine closely and fully in committee is the mandatory suspension of a driver's licence for any person convicted of delivering unmarked cigarettes, selling tobacco without a wholesaler's permit, or transferring or possessing bulk tobacco acquired without a permit.

1530

I want to be very clear to everyone: I absolutely support efforts to reduce smoking rates among young people in our province. So my concern here is not the fact that we're trying to punish these people more severely; rather my concern is about the fact that this punishment is mandatory. It's very important we discuss at committee whether that is the appropriate course of action or whether it would be more appropriate to make sure that the new sentencing options be left in the hands of our court system. This is an important discussion to have because we should always be careful in removing powers from our court system. They are there to exercise discretion in sentencing; to ensure the proportionality of a sentence. We should be wary about removing any kind of power of the courts. Seeing that we're here discussing bills and making laws, we shouldn't take that power away from the courts.

In addition, it is crucial for us to hear from those with past experience as it relates to these new regulations.

Quebec's Bill 59, passed in 2009, brought into force many of these measures in that province. In the six years that have passed since then, their police forces and courts have had the opportunity to build up considerable knowledge about the impact of these regulations. As we move into committee, we must hear from our counterparts in Quebec as to how effective or not these regulations have been. That information is available, and we would not be properly doing our duty to the people of this province if we did not examine it before enacting similar laws.

This bill does important work in terms of helping to enact new regulations that will reduce smoking rates among our kids and our grandkids. However, in its efforts to do that, the bill contains a number of measures that need to be examined fully and carefully at committee.

Like I've said a couple of times already, I'm happy to stand here today in support of this bill; I'll be even happier to support it once it has gone through the examination of the committee.

I'll close by saying: Like all of us, a lot of my friends and colleagues that are here today—there is nothing more important than our kids and our grandkids. We have an opportunity here to send a clear message that we are not going to tolerate having our kids exposed to cigarettes in school so somebody can make a profit at their expense and so that 40 or 50 years down the road, instead of living to be 80, they end up like my mother did: dying at 61.

I encourage all three parties to support this bill. I'll certainly be supporting it. Thank you very much for giving me a few minutes of everybody's time to talk about this important bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: It's my great pleasure to be given the opportunity to speak to the bill presented by the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. Also, I was listening carefully to the debate by the member from Niagara Falls.

I, too, have some personal stories to share with the Legislature. As you know, I came here when I was 13. I spent seven years growing up with my grandparents on my father's side, and both of them were smokers—almost lifelong smokers, as far as I can remember. During my childhood, every night I would hear one of them, or sometimes both at the same time, coughing through the night. That was just part of my memory. Then, as I grew up, I learned the harmful effects of using tobacco and of smoking. That's why in principle I'm supportive of this bill. I'm very glad that it was brought forward by the member opposite.

We have come a long way in Ontario in terms of introducing a smoke-free environment. I think the members of this Legislature can all remember that many years ago—actually, not too long ago; about 10 or 15 years ago—people were able to smoke in bars. There would be different sections, a smoking section and a non-

smoking section. People would be smoking in some of their offices, at home or in their car. We've made it tougher for smokers to actually have a cigarette in an environment they're sharing with everybody else.

I do remember in the very beginning quite a bit of criticism on that, because it does affect some of the local businesses, but I'm proud of our government's record. We've stood firm on this, because of the health of Ontario's future, and our kids.

I just want to share with the Legislature what we've done. We've helped people quit smoking, ensuring young people don't get addicted. In fact, we've invested over \$354 million for tobacco prevention, cessation and protection. I'm very pleased to say that as a result of our efforts, smoking rates have decreased in Ontario from 24.5% in 2000 to 18.1% in 2013. That's over 332,000 fewer smokers, and today we have the second-lowest smoking rate in Canada. That is quite an accomplishment.

I noticed that in this bill the member talked about creating a public education program. I think it's a wonderful idea, because when these programs are shared and taught in class in school, just because of peer pressure you will see a sharp decline in smoking.

Too often, we drive through our constituencies and notice outside a high school, or even sometimes an elementary school—I don't know how they got their hands on cigarettes, but I've noticed students smoking outside a school. It really offends me when I see that. I know the parents teach their kids that this is a bad habit and make sure they know all the negative effects of smoking, but unfortunately, in today's society, there are still quite a few young people smoking outside the schools. Just introducing this program in the schools where they study, where they hang out with their friends, will do quite a bit of prevention of young smokers.

I also want to talk about contraband. It is a crime. Everybody agrees that it is a crime. I know our government has come a long way in trying to fix this problem. In our 2015 budget, we demonstrated how we could build on existing measures by outlining a variety of initiatives aimed at addressing contraband tobacco, including enhancing partnerships with key enforcement agencies, such as the OPP; examining options to regulate additional tobacco product components, such as the acetate tow used in making cigarette filters; and working with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to optimize the effectiveness of compliance efforts by better coordinating retail inspections.

In my riding, there are still a few mom-and-pop shops and convenience stores. Every year here in Queen's Park, we receive the association of convenience stores, and we have conversations over contraband smoking. I know it's hurting those stores. Those people try to make an honest living, and unfortunately they are hurt by these criminal acts.

I'm very supportive of the member's bill, and I hope that members of this Legislature will be supportive as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise in support of my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings's initiative to fight back against the growing and increasingly dangerous, gang-associated underground economy when it comes to contraband tobacco in the province.

1540

I saw an article in the *Toronto Sun*, "Tory MPP Targets Contraband Smokes," by Antonella Artuso, a few days ago, and it got me thinking about this issue more in-depth. I spoke about it a little while ago. The issue has changed tremendously from the time that most of us were growing up. I remember growing up on Lindbergh Drive—I think that the statute of limitations is well past, so I can name names—where Chris Burton stole cigarettes from his babysitter. I don't know when this was—1975 or 1976. He asked all of the boys in the neighbourhood if we wanted to go out in the woods behind my house and smoke these cigarettes. I know members are looking at me and they're thinking that I was a rebel when I was a kid.

Laughter.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You don't have to laugh that hard. Let me just say that I actually said no. I didn't go. I was too straight and narrow. But a bunch of the guys did. They smoked the cigarettes, and that was kind of the innocence—

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Are they in jail?

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's a different question altogether.

It was the innocence of the time, right? But it's far more than kids being kids, trying to become adults too soon and doing things their parents tell them not to. This has now gone to the world of serious, serious crime. Contraband tobacco—not only the health impacts that my colleague and others have properly talked about, but also the way it paves paths for further smuggling of heavy arms, hard drugs and human smuggling—that's what this has effectively done. We're talking about the Hells Angels here. We're talking about some of those vicious Mexican drug gangs that are involved with this trade. My colleague talked about how tobacco grown in Ontario is ending up down in Mexico. It's scary. I think it is big business; it's big criminal business, and we need a big bill and big sanctions to try to curtail it.

I know there was controversy about seizing the vehicle. Look, I worked at customs for a while when I was putting myself through university. It was a fascinating job at the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie. I remember one time, actually, when a guy was crossing the border; I wasn't in the booth at this time, but a colleague was. He was cool as a cucumber. He had nothing to declare. He had just gone across the border, had bought a few things and was coming back into Canada. He lit up a cigarette and then proceeded to toss his Bic lighter out the window.

The Bic lighter was a bit of a tell that he was nervous, so we pulled him over. The car was full of cartons of

tobacco hidden in the door panels and behind the back seat. He was an early contraband tobacco runner. What do you do at customs? You seize the vehicle. This was the case back in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

I remember another time—it's a quick story—where a car was going through the customs line, and it itself started smoking. This one was not as clever as the first guy with the Bic lighter. They had put the cartons of tobacco on top of the engine. So they pull up—

Interjection: Cheech and Chong.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's like Cheech and Chong, my colleague says. That was an easier one to catch, when tobacco smoke starts billowing out of the front of the car.

But I think that that sanction is fair and appropriate. If you're seizing a vehicle when it comes with up to 50 cartons of cigarettes, that's a substantial amount of money for the underground economy. If you seize it at the border, what's the difference if you seize it outside of a high school in Belleville or Beamsville? I think it makes a lot of sense. We've got to take this on, on both the supply and the demand side. There's no doubt.

The bill also talks about increasing the fines for those who are trying to purchase cigarettes illegally. Others may be looking at things on the demand side. The government has given lip service to this issue, but focuses on small measures that might sound good, but that are really ineffective at the end. Focusing on flavoured tobacco or pictures on the tobacco I'm sure in a small way has an impact, but if you really want to attack underage smoking and the criminal activity that is fostered as a result, you have to have a bold initiative like Mr. Smith, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, is doing in this bill, and I'm glad to support it.

So taking away the vehicle, I think, is fair and reasonable. My colleague from Niagara Falls talked about a committee. Great. Maybe we should, in terms of taking the licence away. But this is not the harmless stuff like stealing your babysitter's cigarettes and trying it. This is huge criminal activity with considerable damage to individuals partaking and the crime wave that follows behind that.

Some 43% of cigarettes now are contraband tobacco. Quebec, under Premier Charest, had the courage to take this on. I think we've got to do a heck of a lot more to go after the illegal smoke shacks that are on reserves or slightly off reserves, and that are funneling this. I think we actually have to be bold and clear about this policy.

As I've said before in this House, I do not believe that a young, native kid growing up on-reserve, a young aboriginal boy or girl who sees that a life of crime is a way to get head ahead—that's not helping them, as well. That's not helping to bring in jobs and investments and entrepreneurship. It's a real social policy issue, too, if we look the other way on the big supply.

Surely, the government has done some tinkering on the demand side—we'd do a lot more—but I salute the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for having a bold initiative to go after the supply: the drug lords, the kingpins and the criminals who are benefiting from this

policy. If you're part of that and you lose your car, that's the least that should happen to you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 139, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the Tobacco Tax Act. I applaud the member from Prince Edward-Hastings for bringing this piece of legislation forward.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you've heard the radio ads recently playing on the airwaves about a dramatized 911 call. A lady is calling about her relative being shot and there being blood. Then, the narrator moves on to that the proceeds of crime, wherever they come from, and, certainly, if they come from the sale of illegal tobacco products, go to gangs. They don't invest that money in TFSA's or in pension plans; they buy guns, they traffic in underage kids, they sell drugs, they do other bad things.

So when we're dealing with this, there's the one aspect of it, which I'll get into in a moment, that is about preventing people from smoking, especially young people, but this is about stopping criminals. To those who go out and purchase these cigarettes, who think, "I'm just cheating the government out of some money. I'm not really breaking the law"—they are breaking the law and they are helping others break the law in much more significant ways. It's not a victimless crime to go out and think that you're buying cheap smokes. It's actually a serious crime.

The aspects of the legislation that the member from Prince Edward-Hastings is talking about—targeting those who are moving these products around, targeting those who are purchasing, as well, with more fines and greater sanctions—I think those are good ideas that we should send to committee and delve into more deeply because they are very important.

Certainly, on the other side, I can echo the sad story of the member from Niagara Falls, because I also observed my mother passing away far too early because she was a smoker. All the women in her family for generations lived into their 90s; she died 20 years too young by that comparison and it was because of smoking.

She started out young. I did not take that up and I certainly hope my six-year-old daughter doesn't. I hope that as she gets older and goes on to high school, there won't be people peddling contraband cigarettes in the corners by the high school or the parking lot or a neighbourhood store or wherever the case might be.

So the two parts of this—the intervention, the enforcement and the penalty are very important, and the prevention. Now, in terms of what the government has been doing, I do think there have been effective steps in prevention. We do know that, province-wide, the rate of smoking since the turn of this century has gone down by 6%, and that is significant. It's especially significant if it means fewer young people start smoking. We have invested significant resources in programs to promote not smoking and in programs to help people who have started smoking to get effective help to stop.

Also, one of those aspects of the tobacco industry, whether it's contraband or not, which entices people with supposedly lighter products and flavoured products—the government has brought in legislation to ban the sale of menthol products and other flavoured tobacco products. Those are also important steps.

1550

We are making progress. We are having a successful war against tobacco, but we do need to do more. I do support the member from Prince Edward-Hastings's proposed bill. It's going in the right direction. I do think, as the member from Niagara Falls said earlier, that we need to understand precisely what Quebec did, what is successful about their approach and what has been less than successful. I'd like Ontario to be a leader in these efforts and not just a follower. I think we've done tremendous work so far. We can do better. With the initiative that the member from Prince Edward-Hastings has brought forward, I know we will be able to do better.

I think one of the issues we really have to focus on as well is the underground economy. The Minister of Finance, in the 2015 budget, announced certain measures to help tackle the underground economy. I believe he did mention, in today's fall economic statement, some of the progress that is being made in tackling that. There's much more that we have to do. Certainly the aspect of the underground economy that relates to contraband tobacco is a big part of that, and we need to tackle it. I will be supporting this bill for that reason.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly want to thank my colleague Todd Smith for developing Bill 139, the Smoke-Free Schools Act. I'm an MPP who represents most of the tobacco farmers in Canada, essentially—what's left of them. We have very few farmers left now. They cannot compete with the illegal trade.

Tobacco growing, as many would know, goes back centuries in Canada. It was about 100 years ago that it really accelerated down in Brant, Norfolk, Oxford, Elgin, Middlesex, Essex county and beyond. Many European families came over after the wars, and they spent very long, hard days both planting and harvesting the crop, and trying to negotiate a price with the companies.

Things have changed dramatically just in recent years. I've been involved with tobacco, both agriculture—I spent 20 years at the Addiction Research Foundation and 20 years here. Dramatic changes just in the very recent years—changes for the worse. Just last month—this was mentioned—I was interviewed by a journalist with Reforma. They came up from Mexico City to my little constituency office. A film crew came up from Mexico. This spring, I was interviewed by a camera crew from Guatemala, and another crew came from Costa Rica doing a documentary on illegal tobacco.

Why would they come up here? All the contraband tobacco that has arrived on their shores is grown in Ontario, manufactured in Ontario and shipped down in containers. Ontario's tobacco industry—the illegal side

of it—has become completely out of control. For this reason, I support Bill 139. I support what have proven to be successful initiatives from the Quebec government that give local police jurisdiction to stop the sale of illegal tobacco products and allow municipalities to keep the proceeds that have been confiscated when arrests are made that lead to convictions.

I've always felt that both enforcement and intelligence gathering is very important. I always supported the lowering of tobacco taxes. We saw this in 1994. The NDP Premier at the time, Bob Rae, and Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chrétien lowered tobacco taxes dramatically. I was working for the Ontario Addiction Research Foundation, working on Six Nations. I watched hundreds of smoke shacks disappear overnight. Back then, the illegal trade was maybe 11% of the market. It's considerably higher now. We're looking at 40% or 50%. That approach could be very difficult to do today.

A number of years ago—I think it was in 2009—I did propose and we debated legislation, the tobacco reduction act, to again replicate that slashing of taxes that Bob Rae and Jean Chrétien accomplished. Regrettably, it did not receive the support in this Legislature.

We can't emphasize enough this issue of contraband tobacco. It's certainly creating destruction across my part of Ontario. It's mostly domestic, but it has now become international. It's not visible, essentially. We have very sophisticated operations moving leaf, moving processed leaf, moving cartons and cases across the country and out of the country and leaving behind illegal weapons and other drugs. Human trafficking is involved as well.

I predict things are going to get worse. The province of Ontario is now connected with organized crime in Mexico. This is the reason people have been coming to my constituency office. The province of Ontario is now being viewed, essentially, as an illegal drug pusher, and it's coming right out of just west of Toronto, in this part of southern Ontario.

Speaker, this situation is not good. It has the potential danger to get much worse. We really haven't been able to pull together a viable answer. One proposal that I will throw out to members present—and I may send out a letter to people, actually—is I think it's time that we bring in not only the experts but other people involved.

I think it's time that the Ontario government established a commission—time-limited, maybe six months or nine months; it doesn't have to be an expensive inquiry. Hold hearings, do the research, bring in the papers, and let's really find out. Let's pull together the data, the knowledge, with respect to trafficking of not only tobacco but other drugs, the illegal weapons, human beings, and the connection all of this has now, in a very dramatic way, with organized crime in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Last call: Further debate?

I now return to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thanks to all of those who told their personal stories in regard to smoking and the

dangers of smoking, and the brushes that they've had with illegal tobacco and its movement across the province as well.

To the members from Niagara Falls, Trinity-Spadina, Niagara West-Glanbrook, Haldimand-Norfolk and Etobicoke-Lakeshore: Thank you for your support, first of all, of Bill 139, and your stories to back up why this is important legislation in Toronto.

One of the first meetings that I had as an MPP was with Mr. Hudak, the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook. We were meeting with the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. The very first businessman to stand up in the meeting said, "The biggest problem that I have in my store right now isn't in my store; it's just outside my store. It's this van that's parked there, and it's selling illegal cigarettes right in front of my store." People are driving up and they're paying cash, and they're buying illegal cigarettes at a much cheaper price than they would pay, obviously, if they were purchasing it in the store, a legal establishment.

The other thing that they said was that kids were coming up with coins in their hand, and they were able to purchase cigarettes one at a time or five at a time. So if the kid went through Mom's ashtray in the car and pulled out \$2.75, they were able to go up to this individual selling these illegal cigarettes outside the convenience store in Brampton or Toronto or Mississauga or Belleville, or wherever it might be in the province, and getting their hands on illegal cigarettes, introducing them to the terrible act of smoking, at a discounted price.

1600

So this has to stop. I appreciate the support from all of those in the Legislature in getting this to committee. I also appreciate the efforts of the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society in backing me on this, and I appreciate you being here to support Bill 139 today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everyone for their comments. We will take the vote on this item at the end of private members' business.

SMART GRID CYBER SECURITY AND PRIVACY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA CYBERSÉCURITÉ DU RÉSEAU INTELLIGENT ET LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE

Mr. Tabuns moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act respecting smart grid cyber security and privacy / Projet de loi 140, Loi portant sur la cybersécurité du réseau intelligent et la protection de la vie privée.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Over the last decade, the Liberal government has installed over four million smart meters

at homes and businesses across Ontario. The costs came in at close to \$2 billion, with virtually no savings for homeowners or the electricity system, according to Ontario's Auditor General. Not only was this expensive system a failure in terms of savings, but it diverted almost \$2 billion that could have been used as a rotating loan fund to help families and businesses retrofit their homes and buildings to cut energy use and costs.

A lost opportunity, very high cost, no savings—but beyond that, the smart meter installation has opened up a vulnerability to cyber-attack and invasion of privacy for Ontario families. I introduced this bill, the Smart Grid Cyber Security and Privacy Act, to help limit that vulnerability. I ask members of this Legislature to vote for this bill, which would give the government of Ontario the power to set standards for cyber security and privacy, as well as the power to enforce those standards—not just the power, but the responsibility.

The introduction of smart meters into every home in Ontario fundamentally changes the landscape when it comes to cyber security and personal privacy. This must be addressed. I want to take a look at some other jurisdictions and other experiences to give you a sense of what's on the table, Speaker.

In April 2012, the website Krebs on Security reported on a major smart meter hacking in Puerto Rico. Under the headline "FBI: Smart Meter Hacks Likely to Spread," the website reported—sorry, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Take your time.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Colds wait for no one.

The website reported:

"A series of hacks perpetrated against so-called 'smart meter' installations over the past several years may have cost a single U.S. electric utility hundreds of millions of dollars annually, the FBI said in a cyber-intelligence bulletin....

"Smart meters are intended to ... allow the electric utility to charge different rates for electricity at different times of day....

"But it appears that some of these meters are smarter than others in their ability to deter hackers and block unauthorized modifications. The FBI warns that insiders and individuals with only a moderate level of computer knowledge are likely able to compromise meters with low-cost tools and software readily available on the Internet.

"Sometime in 2009, an electric utility in Puerto Rico asked the FBI to help it investigate widespread incidents of power thefts that it believed was related to its smart meter deployment."

The FBI reported out on their findings:

"The FBI assesses with medium confidence that as smart grid use continues to spread throughout the country, this type of fraud will also spread because of the ease of intrusion and the economic benefit to both the hacker and the electric customer," the agency said in its bulletin.

"The feds estimate that the Puerto Rican utility's losses from the smart meter fraud could reach \$400 million annually."

Let's go to another report. In October 2014, not that long ago, the BBC reported on the potential for hacking smart meters in Spain:

"Smart meters widely used in Spain can be hacked to under-report energy use, security researchers have found," allowing people to steal power.

"Poorly protected credentials inside the devices could let attackers take control over the gadgets, warn the researchers....

"The discovery comes as one security expert warns some terror groups may attack critical infrastructure systems....

"We took them apart to see how they work," said an independent researcher. "We feared the security would be easy to break and we confirmed that," he told the BBC....

"Attackers could use what" the researcher "found to under-report energy use or to get" a neighbour "to pay their bill."

Speaker, there is an incredible opportunity for mischief, for theft and for damage to people who are customers of Ontario's electricity system.

"Security investigator Greg Jones who carried out similar work on smart meters being rolled out in the UK, said he was 'not surprised' about the Spanish researchers' findings....

"Some meters were being installed in their millions across nations, he said, despite security holes having been found in them."

Speaker, hackers can do more than steal power. They can do more than assign someone's electricity bill to their neighbours. In the January 2015 edition of Wired magazine, there was a report about a non-smart meter attack in Germany in 2014. The writer reports, "In a German report released just before Christmas ... hackers had struck an unnamed steel mill in Germany. They did so by manipulating and disrupting control systems to such a degree that a blast furnace could not be properly shut down, resulting in 'massive'—though unspecified—damage."

Speaker, German lawmakers noticed that damage. They noticed the vulnerability of their computer systems, and in July 2015, the German government brought in an IT security act that would require utilities, telecommunications companies, transport, traffic, health and water systems to have a basic level of cyber security to protect the well-being of the population.

I'll just finish off with noting that, in 2014, hackers stole the credit card data from 110 million Target customers—110 million people.

There's a lot more out there of substantiated, reported intrusions and damage by hackers. It's a very big field, it's a growing field, and it's all the more disturbing because of the lackadaisical approach of the Liberal government towards the question of cyber security.

During the hearings at the public accounts committee on the Auditor General's 2014 scathing report on smart meter blunders, I asked senior officials about their awareness of smart meter vulnerability in other jurisdictions. I asked the Deputy Minister of Energy if he was aware of what had been found in Spain, and did he have it under control? He told me that, "Yes, we're looking into this. We're good. We're secure." So I asked him specifically, "So we're safe from ... the vulnerabilities that were found with the Spanish smart meters?" At which point he turned me over to the Ontario Energy Board, and the Ontario Energy Board representative didn't have anything to say about Spain, Puerto Rico, or any other jurisdiction where cyber security had been compromised.

In fact, the Ontario Energy Board doesn't even know what's in place in Ontario with our local distribution companies. In January of this year, the Ontario Energy Board sent out a survey that local distribution companies could answer anonymously about their cyber security. They asked things like:

Does your company have a cyber security program? You know, I kind of figure that if you've got all of these little computers out, attached to people's homes all over your town, that you have to have a cyber security program—apparently not.

Do you use cyber-attack detection and reporting capabilities? One would have thought that, the government being in charge of this smart meter program, it would have required that sort of hardware and software to be put in place—apparently not.

Do you have a cyber-incident response plan? That is, if you're attacked, or if your computers are hacked, do you have a plan in place to deal with that?

Those questions are so fundamental, it's like asking: Do you have locks on the front door of your office building? Or, do you have any guards whatsoever on your works yards? It's extraordinary to me.

I have to note that the Auditor General's report in December 2014 was scathing about the costs, scathing about the lack of savings with smart meters, but she also pointed out substantial problems with privacy and cyber security.

With a smart meter, a utility company can follow you with every device you use in your home through the day, every day. They have a complete record of what you turn on, what you turn off, when you're in your house, when you're out of your house—great material for anyone who is into advertising and marketing if they know very, very detailed elements in your daily schedule. He's great for anyone who is interested in burglarizing houses, as well, because they know when people are in and out.

1610

Local hydro distributors, in response to the Auditor General, indicated that 85% of them had not done even the most fundamental item in protecting privacy: 85% had not done a privacy impact assessment. Beyond that, most of the smaller utilities in Ontario don't operate their own data centres for the material that comes through the

smart meters; they contract it out to a larger data management company. I had legislative research call that company. I found out that the company has had cyber audits, which is a good thing, but had not done a privacy impact assessment. So they may be secure from hackers, but they may not be secure from people in their own operation going through and looking individually at how people live their lives.

I wanted to check on the Independent Electricity System Operator, as well, because the Auditor General spoke to problems with their security. I found out that the IESO has had five consecutive clean audits of their cyber security, but on one pass-through, the Auditor General found that there was a failure to keep track of people who had access to the central data repository in all of the different local distribution companies. She found, in a sampling of 200 people who had access to that very sensitive data repository, that eight had left within about a year without actually being followed up to see if they'd had their credentials revoked in a speedy way.

I would say that what the Auditor General found was that the IESO, the nerve centre of controlling electricity in this province, has a very narrow view of what it's responsible for. It sees itself as being responsible for what's inside its four walls, not for all the other people and institutions that have access to that information.

The Liberal approach to our electricity system has been damaging on so many levels. The Liberals could have acted from day one to embed privacy in this whole system. They could have kept current with what's happening in cyber security around the world. They have not, apparently, done that. I have to say that it's fair to suspect that our privacy and our cyber security are not, at this point, adequately protected.

I urge members of this Legislature to adopt this bill and move forward to protect the families of Ontario, their privacy and their cyber security.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I'm sorry to hear that my colleague from Toronto-Danforth has a cold. I hope he had his flu shot.

It is very nice of him to give a software guy a chance to talk about a vital but esoteric topic, which in this case is cyber security. I also note that I read his bill. It's very short; it's just two very short pages. I thought it a little bit bizarre that he didn't actually talk to his own bill, so I'll talk to his bill.

It's a bill that's interesting in that it's a few years late and a great deal of substance short. The Ministry of Energy, Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One and the Independent Electricity System Operator, which I may refer to as IESO, and in fact the entire power generation and transmission sector were where the member's bill is several years ago. He's out of date. We have since moved on much further than the scope of what the member's bill contemplates.

As long as the member's bill does not ask the province to go backward to the state described in the bill, we wel-

come his interest in cyber security in Ontario's energy system. As well, I'd like to use this time to describe what depth and breadth of electronic security measures are already in place and how Ontarians' privacy and security are already protected.

Ontario is widely regarded as a cyber security leader, both in North America and worldwide. I feel confident in saying that the member for Toronto—Danforth shares the sense of priority that the province feels in protecting the Ontario electricity grid, both the bulk electricity system and local distribution networks.

This summer I had a chance to visit the IESO control room, which is a comprehensive, state-of-the-art facility that is a leader in implementing continent-wide cyber security standards. Ontario is not a follower in cyber security; it is now, and has long been, a leader.

The IESO is a key member of the North American Electric Reliability Corp.'s critical infrastructure protection committee. That long-named committee, for which I'm not even going to try to do an acronym, is a standard-setting body that designed and implemented North America's electrical grid security enforcement policies, rules, protocols and procedures.

In truth, Ontario is one of the go-to places for excellent cyber security practice in North America. In some areas we may have equals, but few, if any, jurisdictions are better at monitoring and securing the province's bulk electricity system.

Good cyber security protects the privacy and security of everyone who uses electricity in Ontario. The bill before us, contrary to what the member talked about, describes a person and an entity responsible for cyber security. That's nice as far as it goes, but the member doesn't go anywhere near far enough. Over and above describing who ought to process paper, analyze data and issue reports, the province has gone much further beyond this.

Smart meters need to have security features to be authorized for use in Ontario. They must effectively prevent unauthorized access. Smart meters in Ontario must implement security features to prevent unauthorized access to the underlying meter firmware infrastructure, and also to protect the actual data recorded. This protocol, for the members' edification, is set out in regulation 425/06, which regulates electricity distributors.

The member could consult the Ministry of Energy's November 23, 2010, directive to the Ontario Energy Board. It sets out the privacy and security objectives, including cyber security. That means the Ontario Energy Board's guidelines for distributed rate filings already include cyber security considerations as part of the evaluation criteria, and also as a component of category-specific requirements for distribution system plans.

A couple of comments based on the member's own comments: Smart meters are absolutely essential to understand electricity usage. If you don't measure it, you're guessing, which is how the NDP formulate policy anyway. Smart meters show where electricity leakage is occurring. If you can't measure it, you don't know where it's going.

If I understand it correctly, the member's solution is not to measure usage, which means that their answer is to deliberately never know about the problem and to shift the costs of theft to the electricity user rate base. That's insane. That's absolutely insane.

Apparently the member thinks that data theft from Target stemmed somehow from Ontario's smart meter program, which is equally bizarre.

The member makes some assertions that smart meters can tell you what's on and what's off in your home. This is false. Unless a specific appliance or a junction box and its firmware—think about how much firmware there is on an electric lamp: none—have an information exchange protocol with a specific appliance, it's not possible for a specific appliance and a meter to record information that it can neither receive nor request.

Speaker, the OEB is in the process of revising its already stringent plans to require distributors to—I'll use their words—"provide evidence of meeting appropriate cyber security and privacy standards." In other words, the standards continue to evolve to be more stringent, more specific and more strict.

The bill cites privacy-by-design standards. These are already incorporated in smart metering design, and have been repeatedly cited by the commissioner as a case study in best practices. According to the Information and Privacy Commissioner—again, I'll use their words—"the IESO's Smart Metering Entity control framework demonstrates a commitment to the standard of privacy by design by taking a systemic and principled approach to embedding privacy within its controls," which is bureaucratic language for, "They're doing it pretty well and they're doing it pretty effectively."

1620

In addition, the Ontario Smart Grid Fund played a key role in supporting N-Dimension. N-Dimension is a North American industry leader in cyber security solutions headquartered right here in Ontario, right in Richmond Hill. Its function is to design a solution for ensuring data security over smart meter networks.

The IESO, as Ontario's reliability coordinator, is subject to stringent, continent-wide cyber security standards. Its core responsibility is to ensure the Ontario bulk electricity system complies completely with these standards and is secured against threats, including those related to cyber security. The IESO, as I mentioned earlier, is a key member of the North American Electrical Reliability Corp.'s Critical Infrastructure Protection Committee, which is the standard-setting body which developed the continent's—not just the province's—electrical grid enforcement regime, which is known by the alphabet soup of NERC CIP standards. These standards are focused on the protection of critical assets, including critical cyber assets. Here's how they define them: "Facilities, systems, or equipment which, if destroyed, degraded, or otherwise rendered unavailable, would affect the reliability or operability of the bulk electric system" and "cyber assets essential to the reliable operation of critical assets."

Now, local distribution companies do have to meet the threshold. They've particularly got to ensure reliability of the bulk electricity system. Large distributors would typically have their own cyber protection plans as part of ensuring their business operations. Let's do a couple of examples: Hydro Ottawa has a cyber security response plan and actively participates in North American security exercises to test its emergency preparedness, including cyber threats. Another one close to home: Burlington Hydro was a utility partner with the company I just mentioned, N-Dimension. On that pilot, they were a global leader in cyber security solutions for the electricity distribution sector, and their Smart Grid Fund project demonstrated a solution to secure smart meter communication.

Now, the standards that I spoke of earlier are also being enhanced, with the next version becoming subject to enforcement as of April 2016, which will be known—if this actually happens to interest you—as CIP version 5. This version will be even more stringent and will require additional measures from—and I'm going to use their words—"responsible entities," which means distributors or transmitters, and require them to ensure that their assets, whether they be physical or virtual assets, are protected appropriately based on their relative importance to the functioning and/or security of the grid or the bulk system.

The member did mention a few things. Most of the problems that he mentioned—I'm going to use a couple that he did. He talked about a problem in Puerto Rico. The tampering scheme appeared to have been perpetrated by former employees of the meter manufacturer and the utility who were altering meters—okay, an inside job. He mentioned an episode in Germany. The attack was made possible by an employee opening a malicious link which compromised the company network and enabled access. So, Speaker, while it is possible for an open port on either a software or a firmware to be accessed by a knowledgeable hacker, you normally have to have inside knowledge to do it.

Now, the member doesn't go into a lot of the details other than to quote newspaper headlines. While we welcome the member's approach in this bill—his approach is to vest regulation-making and authority in cabinet for these measures—I think to ensure a consistent approach I am sure he will support the same approach for the measures that are contained in Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, which is before this House. That would be a very progressive step by the member. I think it's curious that the member would want to prioritize cyber security as a concern for the Minister of Energy over all other considerations in the energy sector, such as greenhouse gas emissions.

The province is already taking significant measures on smart grid cyber security. We welcome their discussion in this House, and we don't think this resolution has much effect on the current situation, so we will trust in the members' judgment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know my colleagues from Chatham–Kent–Essex and from Prince Edward–Hastings will be speaking to this bill, so I'll be relatively quick about it.

First of all, I'll commend the member for Toronto–Danforth. I always enjoy seeing what the member puts forward in question period and in the time for private members' bills. I was surprised by this a little bit because the member, I think, has a very strong reputation around environmental issues; that's been sort of a core belief for the member in the shape of his energies in the Legislature. Energy is another one that he talks about as well.

I hadn't seen the technology side and I hadn't really thought about the importance of this issue, so I commend the member for advancing the energy debate and including cyber technology. He walked through a number of international threats that have taken place. So I'm going to be supporting his legislation today. I think it's a valuable piece of legislation, and I think this is the first time the topic has been discussed here. I don't remember anybody raising it, so good for you in thinking of it and advancing the debate.

It's amazing how time flies and how things change. I remember being at the University of Washington in 1991. I was doing my master's degree at the University of Washington in economics and I was dating a girl in the computer science faculty at the time. She was doing her M.Sc., and she started explaining email to me. I remember the conversation. I said to her, "Jean, come on. This is never going to catch on. Let's just go get a beer." She ended up working for Microsoft and I suspect making a hell of a lot more money than we do as MPPs, so I think she might have made the right choice. But I've had a lot of fun since.

But since then—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I hope you stayed in touch.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We actually do.

Since 1991, it's amazing the advances that have happened. You know, usually when we talk about building electronic infrastructure for communications, we tend to err on the side of the free flow of information, which has been a good thing. When you think about the access to knowledge that we all have as a result, the increase in productivity, individual prosperity, empowering individuals to make better choices, individual liberty, it's been a great thing.

The trade-off, increasingly, when it comes to public goods particularly, has been on the security side, and now we've seen in governments and in the military and such a greater emphasis on that. Certainly with the vast array of connections now through the smart grid, the member is right to hit on this issue today.

Boy, time flies, Speaker. I'm almost done my time to share with my colleagues.

Suffice to say that I think the approach he has taken when it comes to the privacy-by-design principles—Dr. Ann Cavoukian, who was in this place for some time as the commissioner, I thought, had given us good advice. I think that's a sensible way to go forward.

I think in the interests of time that we already agreed to split, I'm now past that, so—

Mr. Todd Smith: Oh, no, you're not. Keep going. You've got another minute to go.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know you enjoy my stories about being a—oh, it's four minutes and three speakers. All right.

So I like this. I think it is good and I think it is getting the right balance of security while at the same time allowing the free flow of information here for efficiency in the system.

I think the member raises some good points as well. Certainly the history of Hydro One has not been an exemplary one when implementing particular policies. The smart grid—we all know about the history there, so I suspect that what the member from Mississauga said is probably not accurate. I just don't believe that the privacy by design was put in the smart grid, because they had trouble even getting the basics done, so it meant this is the proper approach.

Look, privacy by design means the individual experience must be taken into account from step one, an early mitigation of privacy concerns—and importantly, too, to actually hold people accountable at the end of the day, not simply to set up the structure and design, but to hold those who implement it accountable from step one to the end of the process.

I'll leave it at that, Speaker, but congratulations to the member for Toronto–Danforth. I think it's a good initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm always proud to stand in the House on behalf of my residents of London–Fanshawe. Today, I am happy to speak in support of my colleague from Toronto–Danforth's private member's bill, Bill 140, the Smart Grid Cyber Security and Privacy Act.

I'd like to commend the member from Toronto–Danforth for introducing this piece of legislation, which is so important to the safety and security of Ontarians.

1630

My colleague has done some excellent work in his critic portfolio of energy, environment and climate change. Whether it is his work to ensure that seniors in this province aren't tricked into signing fraudulent energy agreements or his continued work on keeping Hydro One in the hands of all Ontarians, I just wanted to take a moment to thank him for all the work he does for his constituents and also in this Legislature.

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's right. We should applaud Peter, because he is a wonderful member.

Speaker, this bill will help fix the mistakes this government made when they were introducing smart meters here in Ontario. I'd like to start by going over some of the background information as to why this bill is so important and why it needs to be passed.

Over the past decade, the Liberal government has installed over four million smart meters at homes and businesses across Ontario. The cost came in at close to \$2 billion, with virtually no savings for homeowners or the electricity system, according to the Ontario Auditor General. Not only was this expensive system a failure in terms of costs, but it diverted almost \$2 billion that could have been used as a rotating loan fund to help families and businesses retrofit their homes and buildings to cut energy use and costs.

Speaker, I'm not here today to say that smart meters were a bad thing to do, but it was another idea that this government did not think through. They have done this time and time again, whether it was the lack of consultation for things like the Green Energy Act or for all-day kindergarten, or what they are doing now with selling off our public hydro—half-baked ideas; not all bad ones, in reference to green energy or education, but all ideas that did not go through the right and appropriate channels before moving forward.

With smart meters, Ontarians are put in a situation where the price tag for this project has skyrocketed to a number that I don't think anyone expected. It also puts our province in a vulnerable situation because of privacy and security concerns. Speaker, insecure smart meters pose a privacy risk to individual consumers, a financial risk to electricity consumers as a whole and a safety risk to the entire grid.

Interestingly enough, this government has acknowledged for years the need for better cyber security with respect to smart meters, but has not acted. This bill will make sure that it finally does. This bill does a few different things.

First, the minister must have regard for the cyber security of the smart grid and related privacy matters when conducting periodical reviews of the energy system.

Second, it requires persons responsible for a distribution system, the Smart Metering Entity, relevant service providers, the IESO and other prescribed persons to comply with prescribed requirements respecting cyber security and the protection of privacy.

It also ensures that the OEB periodically audits compliance.

These are all steps in the right direction, and I'm glad and very happy that the member from Toronto–Danforth has introduced this bill for the betterment of all Ontarians.

Listening to the member from the Liberal Party denying the fact that there are privacy issues that consumers are exposed to is really kind of disappointing. The member from Toronto–Danforth does his homework when he presents legislation. He's a very knowledgeable member when it comes to energy and environment, and we should be listening to his opinions and his expertise in this House.

I hope the members across the way on the government side will support this legislation, because we do have to keep our security and privacy interests first and foremost when it comes to consumers.

When someone gets hold of that information, it can be misused. It unravels people's lives when there are hackers into their privacy, and it's devastating. And correcting those wrongs when that happens to a consumer is like a rabbit hole. It's one thing after another, and the stress it can cause on a life, when it comes to financial distress if someone hacks into your personal banking or personal Internet, medications, benefits or whatever the case may be—all your information—is devastating.

I commend the member again for bringing this forward. It's a very important issue that we should take seriously, and I hope this government will support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Toronto–Danforth for this piece of legislation that he's introduced here for debate this afternoon.

The member from London–Fanshawe, however, shouldn't be surprised when the Liberal member stands up and denies, because that's what they do best over there: deny, deny, deny. You can have all the evidence in the world stacked up, proving the case, but they're still going to deny.

Issues of cyber security and privacy are a growing area of concern in today's increasingly technologically filled lives. With the growing amount of private information being stored electronically, this government needs to do more to ensure that the energy sector safeguards the security and privacy rights of the people of Ontario.

First of all, the people of Ontario don't have a lot of faith in their smart meters as it is; they just don't. The Auditor General's report has proven that their doubt or their lack of trust in the smart meter is warranted. The act respecting smart grid cyber security and privacy is an important step to ensure the cyber security in the energy sector. The smart meters that the government decided to begin implementing back in 2006 track sensitive information about the electricity usage of homes and businesses right across Ontario. Although the Auditor General already stated in her report last year that the smart metering initiative has exceeded both the anticipated costs for the program and resulted in minimal benefits, this government has also not done enough to protect the information that these meters track.

Smart meters collect information on an hourly basis from every single one of the 4.8 million homes and businesses that they're attached to. As the AG pointed out, this data can reveal when people are out of their homes, their daily routines and any changes in their day-to-day lives, yet this sensitive information is not being protected from malicious use.

In Ontario, over 800 distribution company employees have access to view and edit metered data. That's 800 people with access to the 4.8 million smart meters across the province.

With few controls in place, this information can be used to tamper; it can be used to disrupt the grid, it can be used to monitor daily routines and potentially be used

in breaking into people's homes, or other criminal activity.

What's more, 85% of distribution companies have indicated they haven't even completed a basic privacy impact assessment, with the IESO stating that they don't hold the responsibility to review who gets granted access to electricity usage information.

By insisting to press on with an idea that is far from smart, this government, at a minimum, needs to guarantee that the people of this province have their information protected.

With videos circulating on the Internet on how to hack your smart meter, the government has let a serious security gap jeopardize our electricity grid, and exposes the province to millions of dollars in potentially lost revenue, like the potentially lost revenue that has already occurred in another jurisdiction, Puerto Rico, back in 2010, when they were losing \$400 million annually from a smart meter security breach that occurred in that country.

In order to guarantee the safety and security of smart meters, I support the act respecting smart grid security and privacy. The bill helps to address the first steps in ensuring that the people of Ontario are at ease and their electricity usage information is safe, and that our electricity grid is protected.

Thank you to the member from Toronto–Danforth for introducing this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very pleased to rise, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to offer some comments in support of this Smart Grid Cyber Security and Privacy Act, the private member's bill introduced by my colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth.

As we've heard other MPPs acknowledge, certainly the member for Toronto–Danforth is one of the most well informed and knowledgeable members in this Legislature. He demonstrates consistently his deep understanding of the energy file and his laser-like focus on some of the policy impacts associated with the Liberal government's approach to energy planning. I suppose that is not particularly welcomed by members on that side of the House.

1640

Regardless, this week we all received a report from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the smart metering initiative, and that report makes the bill before us today especially relevant. The report included a recommendation that the Independent Electricity System Operator report back to the committee on the steps it has taken to strengthen cyber security, such as the use of encryption with respect to smart meter data at both the provincial data centre and locally with the local distribution companies.

The standing committee undertook its review of smart metering because of the Auditor General's report last year, which I am sure that all of us in this House remember—the Liberals in particular—and which showed that

the government had not bothered to do any analysis of the costs and benefits of smart meters before it pushed through the program. They didn't do any kind of a business plan. They didn't do any kind of due diligence on what the costs would be. They didn't assess whether the program would be able to achieve what it was supposed to achieve and whether the investment that was required would be good value for Ontarians.

Smart metering was intended to allow for time-of-use electricity pricing, which would—so claimed the government—encourage ratepayers to shift electricity usage to times of off-peak demand. The government then directed the OEB to implement the smart metering program after the fact. The OEB was not given an opportunity to review the program in advance, to hold a hearing or to test the assumptions on which the investment would be based.

Of course, we all remember how that played out. The costs of the program ballooned to \$2 billion, almost double what was originally projected. None of the promised savings for consumers materialized. There was no shift in usage patterns and there was no reduction in energy consumption. There were rate increases, however—very significant rate increases—because of the cost to the system of implementing this very expensive program. In her investigation of the smart meter debacle, the Auditor General also found that the business case that was eventually prepared by the government overstated the \$600 million in likely benefits of smart meters by more than \$500 million.

As if this wasn't bad enough, the Auditor General also found that the government had neglected to properly consider the cyber security and privacy risks associated with smart meters and that there were serious gaps in cyber security, including the IESO's failure to use two-step verification and other best-practice security protocols, that could put Ontarians' safety and privacy at risk. What are some of the threats this could pose? One industry analyst identifies seven ways that hackers can attack smart meters. They can replace legitimate ICs with fakes. They can succumb to social engineering and load bad software during manufacturing. They can steal software to clone a smart meter. They can replace legitimate meters with fakes. They can recalibrate meters with insider access. They can monitor and hack communication channels. They can launch physical attacks on a meter to change codes and retrieve keys.

According to the Auditor General's report, the smart meter data could reveal when people are out, their daily routines and changes in their routines. As a result, electricity use patterns could be mined, for example, for marketing and advertising purposes. As has happened in other jurisdictions, smart meter data can be hacked in order to lower electricity bills, resulting in lost revenue to electricity companies and higher rates for legitimate consumers. There is also the potential of disruption of the entire energy grid if unauthorized network access allows the exploitation of electrical control systems.

Speaker, smart meters that do not have proper safeguards pose a significant privacy risk to individual con-

sumers as well as a financial risk to electricity consumers as a whole. Finally, there is, of course, the safety risk to the entire grid.

The government has acknowledged for years the need for better cyber security with respect to smart meters but has not yet acted. This bill will make sure that the government finally does. It creates an oversight mechanism to better protect Ontarians from security breaches related to smart meters. It requires the minister to look specifically at the cyber security of the smart grid and other privacy matters during energy system reviews, and makes cabinet responsible for regulating standards in connection with cyber security and the protection of privacy.

It requires persons responsible for a distribution system, the Smart Metering Entity, relevant service providers, the IESO and other prescribed persons, to comply with requirements respecting cyber security and the protection of privacy, and also gives the OEB the authority to audit compliance.

Currently, there are about 800 distribution company employees in Ontario who have access to smart meter data. All they need is a computer connected to the Internet to hack into it.

I urge all MPPs to support this bill to safeguard the security of Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 140, the Smart Grid Cyber Security and Privacy Act, 2015. Imagine that.

It's very clear to everyone on this side of the House that the government's smart meter program has been a complete disaster. We already know that it has delivered very little value for taxpayers in terms of dollars. That was confirmed, by the way, by the Auditor General just last year. The auditor said, "Based on a \$2-billion investment, there doesn't seem to be \$2 billion of value coming yet."

The auditor also noted that the Liberal government had decided to dive headfirst into the smart meter program without proper planning. Gee, imagine that: diving in headfirst. It's like being on a dock that you're unfamiliar with and just diving into the water, only to find out that water is only three feet deep—sad, sad, sad.

This program has cost far more than it should, it yielded little in terms of benefits for the province, and it was implemented poorly. Now there are concerns that smart meters are vulnerable to attack, which could in fact jeopardize homeowners' security.

Did you know, Speaker, that a November National Post article stated, "Around the world, people have been able to break into the electronic monitors of power usage to lower their own bills, steal power or potentially even disrupt the whole power grid"?

While there have been no incidents reported in Ontario yet, it is critical that we do tackle this security issue now.

We've seen this government's slow response time to hacking incidents in the past. In 2012, a number of

ServiceOntario kiosks were compromised. Attempts were made to gain access to important credit and debit card data that would allow for the replication of these cards, which was obviously a major concern for Ontarians. In response to this serious security issue, the province left Ontarians in limbo for—count ‘em—five months until they decided to shut it all down. Because of the government’s inability to protect the data of its citizens, they removed a popular and efficient service.

There is potential for an incredible amount of disruption to the grid, and we cannot leave gaps in homeowners’ security open. The province has in fact forced its citizens to participate in the program, and it has collected untold amounts of data along the way. It’s the basic responsibility of government to do all that it can to ensure safety and security of the power grid and to protect the private data of its citizens.

I applaud the member from Toronto–Danforth for bringing this bill forward before a serious data breach occurs. As we’ve seen, the government moves slowly when it comes to correcting data breaches, and the only responsible course of action is to take immediate steps to close the gaps in homeowners’ security that were in fact created by the disastrous smart meter program.

Speaker, in case you haven’t noticed, I will be supporting Bill 140 at second reading, and I certainly hope that the government will do the same. To do otherwise would only leave Ontarians at risk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Toronto–Danforth. You have two minutes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond. I want to thank the members from Niagara West–Glanbrook, London–Fanshawe, Prince Edward–Hastings, London West, Chatham–Kent–Essex and, of course, Mississauga–Streetsville for their comments.

1650

Many people had useful things to say about this bill and about the situation that we’re confronting, but I want to note that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville seemed to feel that this bill was unnecessary because things were so advanced in Ontario that of course it was all protected.

I have to say, as of December last year, that the Auditor General recommended, in her report on smart metering, in recommendation 10, “To ensure that smart meter data is processed and stored securely, the Independent Electricity System Operator should work with the distribution companies to improve their system and data security controls in order to prevent and detect unauthorized access to smart meter data.”

As of December last year, the Auditor General was of the opinion that a lot more work had to be done in this area. She had found that 85% of local distribution companies hadn’t done the most basic work to protect the privacy of their ratepayers, had not put in place a privacy impact assessment.

Speaker, you can talk about all the software and firmware you want to talk about, but if you don’t actually

have the rules in place, if you don’t have a body that’s overseeing the system as a whole, if you don’t have an audited performance so that you can tell whether people are actually implementing what you’ve required, then you don’t have the protection for Ontario’s families, you don’t have cyber security, and you don’t have privacy protection.

I have to note that in terms of setting priorities for the Minister of Energy, I was in estimates a few weeks ago and the minister himself expressed that cyber security was one of the greatest challenges confronting the grid in North America.

Speaker, I urge members to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members’ public business has expired.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 6, standing in the name of Miss Taylor.

Miss Taylor has moved second reading of Bill 146, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 with respect to the disclosure of specified information relating to children and services in respect of children.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—the member for Hamilton Mountain?

Miss Monique Taylor: Justice Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Justice Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

SMOKE-FREE SCHOOLS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 FAVORISANT DES ÉCOLES SANS FUMÉE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 139, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the Tobacco Tax Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to?

Mr. Todd Smith: General government, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): General government. Agreed? Agreed.

SMART GRID CYBER SECURITY
AND PRIVACY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA CYBERSÉCURITÉ
DU RÉSEAU INTELLIGENT
ET LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Tabuns has moved second reading of Bill 140, An Act respecting smart grid cyber security and privacy.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member is requesting it be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am happy to be able to participate in the debate on Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. I am going to be offering some comments on behalf of the people I represent in London West about what is probably one of the most critical issues we deal with as legislators, and that is the issue of energy planning and decision-making in this province.

This bill, Bill 135, is one of three bills that have been brought forward by the government during the fall session to deal with energy planning. The culminating effect of these three bills taken together is a fundamental altering of the process of how government energy decisions are made. Together, these three bills—Bill 135, Bill 112 and Bill 144—provide the legislative scaffolding for the government's sell-off of Hydro One and pave the way for further energy privatization in this province.

With Bill 135, we see the official abandonment of an independent and transparent long-term energy planning and approval process, a process that has been in place in this province since 2004 and that did include statutory requirements for public consultation and input in power planning, even if the government has, in the past, chosen to ignore those statutory requirements.

We have seen over this past year—and long before—that the government has never been truly committed to an independent and transparent long-term energy planning and approval process. Despite the current provisions of the Electricity Restructuring Act for integrated power system plans to be completed and updated every three years, not a single plan has ever been approved in Ontario.

Most recently, we saw the government refuse to submit its Hydro One privatization scheme to the Ontario Energy Board for review or even to disclose the analyses that were prepared for the Ed Clark panel—this as part of a process that the Premier said would be “transparent, professional and independently validated.” We saw the Financial Accountability Officer try to get access to government documents about the sale but be blocked by invocations of cabinet secrecy.

Clearly, this government has no interest in giving the public the ability to analyze and provide input into their energy policies. They have no interest in having independent third-party assessments of their energy plans and they have no interest in getting the kind of analysis that they need so that they can decide whether or not to proceed with energy projects. This is particularly important when we look at the costs of these projects, like the more than \$1 billion that was spent on the gas plants and the \$2 billion that was spent on the smart meters.

However, at least we currently have in place an energy planning and approval system that provides some—a modicum of—transparency and accountability. At least we currently have legislative requirements for mandatory hearings and disclosures by the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board.

With this bill, with Bill 135, all of those protections are lost. The unaccountable, closed process that the government has consistently followed becomes formalized. It now becomes written into law with the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

Bill 135 removes planning and approval authority from the Ontario Energy Board and the IESO and relegates both organizations to the role of being implementers of the government's plan. This will make it even easier than it already is for private interests to lobby the government to get their approval for costly and risky energy projects without being subject to any kind of independent public scrutiny. No longer will there be any public process for citizens to intervene and to grill the minister about energy planning.

1700

Bill 135 further erodes the power of the Ontario Energy Board, an erosion which we saw starting earlier

this fall in Bill 112. That legislation exempted large-scale electricity transmission and distribution projects from OEB review once they had been deemed by the government as priority projects.

This morning, we saw the government move to close third reading debate on Bill 112, which means that very soon the Liberals will have the authority to exempt projects like the privatization of Hydro One. The changes that the government is making mean that no longer will Ontarians have the formal, legislated right to be part of the decision-making on energy projects.

Speaker, if the Ontario Energy Board is supposed to protect Ontarians from skyrocketing hydro rates that will be associated with a privatized Hydro One—and that, certainly, is what we hear over and over again from the government: not to worry, your rates will be kept low because the Ontario Energy Board will make sure of that—then why is the government undermining the Ontario Energy Board's independence and its regulatory authority over the energy system?

In 2006, the government relegated the OEB to the role of implementing ministerial directives related to the Smart Metering Initiative with no independent scrutiny, and we know from the Auditor General that this came at a financial cost of \$2 billion.

We heard earlier this afternoon, during the debate on the Smart Grid Cyber Security and Privacy Act, that it also made our citizens vulnerable to cyber attack.

The government ignored the OEB as a regulator when it brought in smart meters. It is removing the OEB from review of the transmission sector with Bill 112—a transmission sector that is dominated by private investors; and now, with Bill 135, it is excluding the OEB from playing any role in the energy planning process.

Essentially, with this legislation, the government is changing the regulatory framework around Hydro One to maximize the opportunity for profit, as part of its marketing strategy for the broadening of ownership.

Just as Bill 112 means that setting priorities for power lines will no longer be discussed or debated in public, Bill 135 means that the minister alone assumes all the power to do energy planning, all of the power to tell the OEB and the IESO to implement the energy plan. There is no longer any accountability, because the right to an environmental assessment on energy projects is also taken away in this legislation.

I now want to review some of the most troubling provisions of this bill: the amendments that it proposes to the Electricity Act and the Ontario Energy Board Act.

Bill 135 amends the Electricity Act so that the IESO is no longer responsible for preparing an integrated power system plan to be reviewed by the OEB and updated every three years. Instead, the bill says that the minister shall, subject to cabinet approval, “issue a long-term energy plan setting out and balancing the government of Ontario’s goals and objectives respecting energy.” It puts the minister in charge of energy planning instead of the IESO and the OEB.

It also introduces amendments that require the IESO and the OEB to implement the plan that is developed by

the minister. The minister is able to issue a directive to the IESO to develop an implementation plan. The minister is also able to issue a directive to the OEB to develop an implementation plan.

Finally, the bill also amends the Electricity Act to exempt the Environmental Assessment Act from any planned directive, direction or other document that is introduced by the new sections of this act.

The other, most troubling provision of Bill 135 is the amendment to the Ontario Energy Board Act. I think this is the key concern of this bill. Bill 135 now requires the OEB to implement directives as issued by the minister and approved by cabinet with respect to the construction, expansion or re-enforcement of transmission systems.

This is one of the biggest expansions of ministerial directive authority that this province has ever seen. Although this may be under the radar of many Ontarians, it is a serious concern, and this bill should be opposed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great honour to rise today to speak to Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. I support this bill for a number of reasons. First and foremost, Ontarians have made it clear that they want long-term energy planning that is clean, reliable and affordable. Bill 135 will ensure that Ontarians have that and much more.

This bill will allow us to not only put a process in place that is both transparent and efficient, but also one that enables us to respond to future changes in policy and system needs. Our province needs a simplified system that is predictable, efficient and with increased responses that will allow us to plan well into the future. Ontarians have also been clear that they want to play a larger role in our government's long-term energy planning process.

Our government has listened. This is why the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, would ensure that a consistent, transparent and long-term planning process is followed. It would also enshrine in law a requirement for extensive consultation with the public, stakeholders and aboriginal groups in the development of energy plans. As well, it will amend the Green Energy Act, 2009, to introduce two new initiatives to help Ontario families, businesses and the province as a whole conserve energy and water to manage costs. Crucially, it will support increased competition and enhanced ratepayer value by empowering the IESO to undertake competitive processes for transmitter selection or procurement where necessary.

I am proud that one of our government's key goals is energy conservation. As I mentioned earlier, Bill 135 would introduce two new initiatives to help Ontario families, businesses and the province as a whole conserve energy and water to manage costs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 135, one of the worst pieces of legislation we have had cross our desks here at Queen's Park in the last four

years. I think the member from London West did an excellent job outlining some of her concerns. I'm sure she could have gone on for another 20 minutes, because she was just getting warmed up. I think she was getting to her most grave concern when her time ran out. Perhaps she can expand on that a little bit more in the two minutes she has remaining.

We have a lot of concerns with this terrible piece of legislation, Bill 135. When I talk about it being the worst piece of legislation, we're talking about a bill that takes control of the energy sector and puts it in the office of the Minister of Energy. This government has done so much damage to our electricity grid by playing politics with it that the last thing we need is to centralize control in the Minister of Energy's office, which really means the Premier's office.

Every time I meet with a power stakeholder in the energy sector, whether they're from the IESO or OPA or the engineers, they say this government has done it completely backwards and made a mockery of our electricity grid in Ontario. The member opposite talks about wanting a clean, green, reliable and affordable electricity grid. We have anything but that now—especially the affordable part—because of the mistakes they have made, like running a \$100-million electricity corridor to nowhere. That's just one example of the mistakes this government has made. These aren't the planners or the engineers who are making these mistakes; this is the government of Ontario that has interfered in the energy sector, and they're doing it wholeheartedly in Bill 135. They're making another grave mistake in our power policy in Ontario with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to commend the member for London West for her comments about Bill 135. I think she got right to the substance of what we're dealing with here. There's all kinds of greenwash and all kinds of lipstick put on this particular bill, but the guts of it, really, is that the public is going to be locked out. The public ability before the OEB to question decision-makers, test evidence under oath and actually get at the substance is being washed away—gone, Speaker.

1710

The member from Davenport commented that this will make the system simpler, more efficient. No doubt. I think that when you have one-person-rule, that's very simple and very efficient as well. But I have to say that there is great value in making sure the public has the opportunity, in an open forum, to go through all the assumptions.

We've seen some very strange assumptions on the part of the government when it comes to electricity planning in the last 12 years. We saw a government that spent a fortune on gas-fired power plants when it could have spent substantially less, meeting Ontario's power needs by investing in conservation. Now that they've built out about as much power generation capacity as the province can handle—frankly, more—now they're talking about conservation for the future.

Speaker, when you have a system where the minister really doesn't have to answer to the public, and has not answered to the public, frankly, since 2003, you get huge distortions; you get investments in useless infrastructure; you get bills piled on bills on people's electricity rates; and frankly, you get a system that is not ready to deal with the climate change issues or the cyber security issues.

The member is quite correct: The government is going down a path that facilitates privatization but does not facilitate democratic intervention in our energy system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 135, the energy system planning section, and to follow the comments from the member from London West.

I would like to specify that this legislation would enshrine the long-term energy planning process that developed the 2010 and 2013 long-term energy plan, to ensure that future long-term energy plans are developed consistent with the principles of cost-effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, community and aboriginal engagement.

The proposed legislation would give the government the ability to set the goals and objectives for the energy sector, after consideration of independent technical information on the sector from the IESO, and after consulting with the public, stakeholders and aboriginal groups. Once the long-term energy plan has been developed, the IESO would be responsible for independently—implementing the government's goals and objectives.

I also want to say that the act would support increased competition and enhanced ratepayer value by empowering the IESO to undertake competitive selection and procurement of transmission projects. The current process, the Integrated Power System Plan, is slow; it's unresponsive to the changing environment of the energy sector; and it is also costly.

Unlike the current process, the long-term energy plan process would be able to respond in a timely manner to changing policy, program and technology needs, and it would reduce the complexity of the process and reflect a more integrated approach to planning, to consulting and to implementation.

I'm out of time, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everyone for their comments. I now return to the member for London West. You have two minutes.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the member for Davenport, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, the member for Toronto–Danforth and the member for York South–Weston for their contribution to this debate.

The member for Prince Edward–Hastings talked about the Liberal government's penchant for playing politics with the energy sector. Speaker, in some respects, I am a beneficiary of that. I was elected in London West following the resignation of the former Minister of Energy,

Chris Bentley, who carried the can for the Liberals on the gas plant debacle. That allowed me to get elected, because people had no support for the Liberals' approach to energy policy: this brazen political decision about the siting of the gas plant, regardless of the cost to taxpayers.

What we have seen over the fall in the three bills I mentioned—Bill 135, Bill 112 and Bill 144—is the Liberals trying to sneak in their framework of privatization of energy in this province: in Bill 135 under the guise of energy conservation, in Bill 112 under the guise of consumer protection, and in Bill 144 under the guise of budget measures in an omnibus bill.

This bill puts control of the energy sector directly in the office of the Minister of Energy. It pays lip service to consultation and does not enable any kind of meaningful opportunities for citizens to participate in the development of energy policy in this province, in testing the assumptions on which energy policy is based, and in questioning what is the long-term impact of these energy decisions that this government is making.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning.

Bill 135 proposes a number of changes to the Green Energy Act, 2009, the Electricity Act, 1998, and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

If enacted, Bill 135 will effectively remove independent electricity planning and procurement authority from the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO, and transmission approval from the Ontario Energy Board, the OEB. Both of these types of authority will be transferred to the Minister of Energy.

Recognizing that Ontario's energy planning should be more scientific than political or ideological, I'd like to start with a quote from McCarthy Tétrault's George Vegh's analysis of Bill 135, found in *Canadian Energy Perspectives*:

"... although Bill 135 is clear that authority for every electricity decision will reside with the government, it does not address how the government will exercise that authority. Given the magnitude of the issues involved, one can only hope that the government will develop new governance models to guide the exercise of its apparently unrestricted powers."

I sense that the government does not share that concern and will plow ahead regardless of evidence.

This afternoon, I will focus on specific parts of the proposed legislation and will question the government's motive and rationale for the legislative changes proposed to Ontario's electricity generation, transmission, distribution and now storage. This government never seems to cease interfering with the energy file. Whether it's the asset fire sale of Hydro One to balance the budget on time or cancelling power plant projects to win elections, the only constant throughout is higher electricity prices, and I predict the same outcome from Bill 135.

Since they are so germane to this discussion, what are the IESO and the OEB?

According to the website, the Independent Electricity System Operator "works at the heart of Ontario's power system—ensuring there is enough power to meet the province's energy needs in real time while also planning and securing energy for the future." I must say that I have recommended to many people, to gather a greater understanding of the way in which energy is provided in this province, to go to the IESO website, where they can see in real time what in fact is generating their energy.

But back to the responsibilities of the IESO. It balances the supply of and demand for electricity in Ontario, directing its flow across the province's transmission lines, and it plans for the province's medium- and long-term energy needs and securing clean sources of supply to meet those needs.

1720

Complementary to the IESO, the Ontario Energy Board oversees the energy sector in Ontario. The OEB makes sure that electricity and natural gas companies follow the rules. Its objective is to promote a viable, sustainable and efficient energy sector that serves the public interest and assists consumers to obtain reliable energy services that are cost-effective. The OEB is an impartial public agency that licenses and oversees energy companies, including utilities, generators and companies that offer energy under contracts. It creates codes, rules and guidelines for companies it licenses and rate regulates to follow. It approves the rates that utilities can charge their customers for natural gas supply, delivery and transportation. It sets time-of-use prices and times for electricity supply. It approves new construction of or changes to existing natural gas pipeline and storage facilities and to electricity transmission lines that are more than two kilometres long. It creates and makes changes to regulatory energy policies. It supplies information and tools to help consumers make informed choices about energy matters. It makes decisions by carrying out public hearings, working groups and consultations to review and process hundreds of applications in a year.

As you can tell from these descriptions, the IESO and OEB perform important functions independent of government. In fact, it appears imperative that these organizations stay separate and independent from the Minister of Energy, but Bill 135 will do just the opposite. It is impossible to assess all the possible impacts of Bill 135 since most of the important details are left up to the Premier and her cabinet to decide behind closed doors. We do know that when this majority Liberal government passes Bill 135, the energy minister will produce long-term energy plans that will be binding on both the OEB and the IESO, both of whom must issue implementation plans designed to achieve the objectives of the government's plan.

The government's new planning authority is broader than the IESO's and also extends to distribution systems. The government's existing procurement authority will

also be extended, as Bill 135 gives the government additional powers to direct the procurement of energy storage and transmission. The McCarthy Tétrault analysis makes the government's intentions clear: "The net result of Bill 135 is therefore to ensure that the main energy institutions—the IESO and the OEB—are focused almost exclusively on implementing government plans and directives. The government has always been steering the direction of energy policy. It is now rowing as well: It is in direct control of every policy instrument available. From a governance perspective, it could lead one to wonder whether there are any checks and balances left in the system...."

At this point, I would like to remind the members of this House and all Ontarians of the \$1.1-billion gas plants scandal that the opposition pried open a few years ago. The government cancelled two large gas-fired power plant projects in the middle of an election to win seats. The more expensive of the two was the Mississauga project that the Liberals cancelled during the 2011 provincial election. These plants were cancelled in order to get votes, and the Minister of Energy was at the centre of it all. The government concocted a scheme called Project Vapour, among other code names, used to attempt escape from forensic audit. With a partisan, premeditated plan, the government admitted publicly that "Ontario's Minister of Energy cited changes in electricity demand and supply that made the proposed natural gas plant no longer needed."

If there is anything that the gas plant scandal taught us, it would be that the Minister of Energy should not have the power to unilaterally override the province's energy plan on a whim. The Minister of Energy should have less power over energy system planning, not more, due to perceived and real conflicts of interest, and, further, the minister is not an expert in planning electrical systems.

Bill 135 raises a number of questions for both the agencies and the government. There are more questions than answers with this bill. Bill 135 continues this government's approach to Ontario's electrical system: ever-changing, misguided and unscientific. Since the Minister of Energy only used less than 40% of his allotted time to explain Bill 135 to Ontarians, questions remain and fester.

This bill should not be supported. I would go back to where I began with the quote that "one can only hope that the government will develop new governance models to guide the exercise of its apparently unrestricted powers."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, I want to thank the member from York-Simcoe for her commentary about Bill 135. I think she is quite correct in saying that we should all be apprehensive about a government that has tried to throw off as many checks, as many opportunities for public intervention in power planning, as this government has done.

She's quite correct to be skeptical about the results of that kind of process. We've seen those results with the

smart meter boondoggle. We saw with it the gas plant scandal. We see with it a government that, on a regular basis, does everything it can to make sure that certain private operators are extraordinarily happy with the hydro system in Ontario and that many, many ratepayers are in a very difficult situation.

Don't expect Bill 135 to address either of those things; in fact, expect that Bill 135 will make things worse. I think the member was quite correct in being very skeptical and also noting that the government didn't use its full time to explain or defend the bill that they brought forward. It's as if, for them, this chamber is simply a formality, and not a terribly important one, either. If you're bringing forward a substantial bill that changes the way energy planning is done in Ontario—to be honest, the government has ignored the law for easily most of the last decade—then you should at least appear in this chamber and explain and outline the background of why this change is necessary.

Simply having a system that's more simple—as I said in an earlier comment—doesn't necessarily mean things will be better for Ontarians. In fact, I think the member from York-Simcoe is correct: It's more likely things will be fundamentally and sharply more difficult for all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm happy to respond to the statement by the member from York-Simcoe and, of course, the member from Toronto-Danforth.

When it comes to energy in the province of Ontario, I think being a Liberal makes people feel proud, because if you look at our record over the last decade in this province, we have drastically changed the way energy has been delivered in this province, and I'm very proud of our track record.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I decided to run as a Liberal back in 2011, I remember going over the material and looking at the policies and our track record. You look at it from this perspective from today and you talk about the coal plants. I don't think the Conservatives supported that initiative.

I know when it comes to conservation here in the province of Ontario, I think the NDP has voted against any of the initiatives we've put forward. If you look through Bill 135, there are initiatives for further conservation of energy and water here in province of Ontario.

Closing those coal plants was a political decision. It was a political decision here in the province of Ontario, and Mr. Speaker, we've drastically reduced asthma cases here in the province of Ontario. It was the equivalent of taking half a million cars off the road.

1730

As a Liberal, I'm proud of our approach to energy. I'm proud of our approach to the environment and making sure that we've brought forward some green policies. And I'm very, very proud of what we've been able to do.

This bill, Bill 135, is about being cost-effective. It's about building a reliable energy system that's clean, that is built on engagement with communities and aboriginal

communities here in the province of Ontario. When we talk about conservation here in the province of Ontario, this bill addresses those pieces. In the long run, it will help families save money, it will help businesses save money and it will reduce the need for additional expensive infrastructure because it deals with—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I would remind the member opposite it was Elizabeth Witmer who announced—as she was the Minister of Energy—closing Lakeview, one of the dirtiest coal power plants. I wasn't that involved in politics and I still remember that it was an argument not about whether or not to close the coal plants but who was going to be able to close them sooner. The PCs felt it was going to take a little bit longer, an extra couple of years, and the Liberals said, "No, we can close them sooner." But in the end, they delayed and delayed and they ended up closing them, I think, around the same time or slightly after the PCs said they were going to close the coal plants.

I shouldn't bang on the desk. Sorry about the microphone, people in the booth.

Save money: How are you suggesting that businesses and residents are going to save money when we have the highest electricity costs in North America? How is that possible?

Mr. Chris Ballard: No, we don't.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Name an area that has higher, because I haven't been able to find one and I've been searching, okay? We certainly have the highest energy costs, probably, in Canada; I think, in North America. That's what I'm being told.

We're being told by the government that we should just trust. We should allow more power; we should become like China. Our new Prime Minister said that he admired China because they got things done. Why do they get things done? Because there's no oversight. Obviously, this Liberal government, as well as the federal Prime Minister, believe in that type of governance—undemocratic, no oversight, just get things done their way and the hell with the costs of electricity, the hell with businesses that are leaving the province, the hell with the fact that we're cutting doctors' fees because we say we don't have money.

In the meantime, electronic health records: \$1 billion. The ambulances: very quietly you see in the Toronto Star that they have to order new ambulances because you didn't have oversight and you didn't make sure that the proper ambulances were ordered in the first place.

A two-minute hit doesn't give us enough time to list all the scandals, unfortunately.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Can I correct my record? I said that it was the equivalent of half a million cars taken off the roads by closing the coal plants. It's actually seven million cars. I'm sorry about that, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Every member is allowed to correct their record.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to offer some comments on the remarks from the member for York-Simcoe. I think she really has uncovered what is the poison pill in this legislation that the Liberals would so desperately like us to think is about energy conservation. Essentially what this bill is doing is saying to the citizens of this province, "Trust us." Speaker, the citizens of this province have seen too many times the kinds of scandals that trusting Liberals can get Ontario into. We saw over \$1 billion wasted on the gas plant scandal. We saw \$2 billion wasted on the smart metering initiative.

Currently, there are legislative requirements already within existing statutes that require independent review and oversight from the IESO and the OEB. This bill before us today, Bill 135, removes that power, that authority, that independent oversight from the OEB and the IESO. It centralizes total control for energy policy in the office of the Minister of Energy. It depends on the whim of the minister what kind of consultation will take place. It does not include any kind of obligation on the part of the government to take into account the input that citizens might want to offer. It does not require the government to be accountable for what they are proposing to do with energy policy.

This is a very dangerous bill, Speaker. It takes us on a very dangerous path, and I urge all members to oppose it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for York-Simcoe. You have two minutes for your reply.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like to thank the member from Toronto-Danforth, the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Sport, the member for Thornhill and the member for London West.

There are a couple of things that I need to highlight in the comments that were made. The one from the member for Toronto-Danforth talked about the checks and balances. That's the fundamental process that democracy has, that there's a balance and you have to hear both sides, and you have to have checks and balances.

The other members have raised the issue of the role that the Progressive Conservative Party of this province introduced, through Elizabeth Witmer—it was, of course, to set up the decommissioning of the generating stations, which, by the way, took the Liberals as long to close as we had identified it would take.

The other thing that I think is a part of the theme of the people who spoke was the whole issue of how fundamentally wrong this bill is. When the minister says he's proud to be a Liberal and of their energy policy, I would like to transfer to him all my emails that deal with the angst and the shortages that seniors and people on fixed incomes have in managing their hydro bill.

Their notion of conservation, I think, is turning off the lights; for mine, it's lowering the heat. We have people who actually have to choose between eating and heating. So I certainly couldn't stand and be proud of that as the record.

I think that this is an affront to democracy, it is an affront to the systems that have been in place of consultation, of balancing it off, and the whole idea of the minister having that kind of power—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am always proud to stand in the Legislature on behalf of my constituents in London-Fanshawe.

I rise today to speak to Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act. I'd like to thank my colleagues for sharing their thoughts on this bill. I strongly believe that all pieces of legislation in this House should go through a process in which members can speak to their merits and also share their thoughts on behalf of their constituents. Unfortunately, Speaker, time and time again we have seen this government time-allocate pieces of legislation without due process. We are elected to this House with a job to introduce, review, amend and pass legislation.

In the last election, the millions of Ontarians who voted did not put us here to rush through bills and motions without having a thorough understanding of how they will affect this province. I know that the residents of my riding of London-Fanshawe would be appalled to know that this government is pushing through legislation without having as many members speak to it as possible. This kind of behaviour reminds me of a similar government that has fortunately been kicked to the curb on the federal level in this country: the Conservative government under Stephen Harper.

In June 2015, the federal Conservatives cut off debate for the 100th time in the House of Commons. According to the members of the opposition, the Conservatives had denied Parliament the right to fully debate nearly 60 pieces of legislation containing over 11,000 pages—that is unheard of.

Unfortunately, this Liberal government here in Ontario is on a dangerous mission to end debate here in this Legislature, just like the federal Conservatives did. I am hoping that in future pieces of legislation, this government will learn not to time-allocate and to, instead, have an open and thorough debate on the bills in this House.

Just this morning, we voted on a time allocation motion for Bill 144 that the government put through, which was the Budget Measures Act.

1740

So again the time allocation, and there were members on our side of the House, in the NDP caucus, who really had a true burning desire to speak to Bill 144, and they were shut down because of time allocation. I was fortunate enough to speak for 20 minutes and I gave the government my opinions about this time allocation and the fact that they're kind of hiding the sell-off of Hydro.

It's an omnibus bill, this Bill 144, and they were covering it up there.

But let's get back to Bill 135. Simply put, Bill 135 further moves Hydro One into private hands. The OEB and the IESO become less relevant to energy planning in Ontario. So there is less oversight. This government says they want to invest in infrastructure and transit, but they are selling off one of our most important public assets here in Ontario to do that. I know that Ontarians are not on the same page, so I have one question for this government: Who will they listen to? One hundred and eighty-five municipalities across Ontario have said, "Keep hydro public." Thirty-six chambers of commerce have said, "Keep hydro public." All the independent officers of the Legislature have said, "Keep hydro public." Just a couple of weeks ago, the Financial Accountability Officer said, "Keep hydro public." It's astounding that this government is continuing its sale of Hydro One even though so many Ontarians have spoken out against it.

I'd like to read a quote from the Financial Accountability Officer on what he thinks will be the result of this sale:

"The province's fiscal position will deteriorate compared to if they didn't undertake this sale ... The sale of Hydro One will have an immediate improvement to the province's balance sheet, but because of the loss of the net income that results from the partial sale of Hydro One, there will be subsequent worsening of the government's fiscal position relative to if this sale had not occurred."

This report is further proof that this government is off track with its plan to sell off Hydro One. It shows that the province's annual loss from the sale will ultimately be between \$300 million and \$500 million.

Over the past several months, we have received hundreds of emails from people all over the province who are opposed to the Hydro One sale. Amy wrote my office, saying, "We need to ensure reliable power for future generations. The government needs to look long term—not short term." Speaker, this government does not have a long-term plan for this province. If they really wanted to invest in infrastructure, build transit and help Ontarians, they would not be selling off Hydro.

I will ask the question once again: Who will this government listen to? If not 185 municipalities, 36 chambers of commerce, all independent officers of the Legislature and thousands of Ontarians like Amy, who will they listen to? Will it be Ontarians, who have been loud and clear opposing Hydro One, or will they turn their backs on this province, like they have done so many times before?

A group that has seen little attention from this government on the sale of Hydro One are First Nations and Métis populations. Frankly, this government has ignored their concerns on the Hydro One sale. In fact, the Chiefs of Ontario leader Isadore Day has said that the government failed in its constitutional duty to consult with First Nations groups on this issue. And the prospectus noted

that a perceived failure by the crown to sufficiently consult a First Nation or Métis community could result in legal challenges and injunctions.

Another court action that's possibly on the burner for this government: This morning, our labour critic from Welland asked a question with respect to schedule 2 of Bill 109 and taking away the democratic right of workers to vote for a union. This government doesn't seem to understand that there's a civil rights issue there and they again can be challenged on that legislation.

Do we really need another court action from this government? Are Ornge, the deleted emails, misleading gas plants and eHealth really not enough for this government? Why is this government turning their back on aboriginal communities and trading off their interests for those of private companies? That's just wrong.

Finally, I'd like to talk about what the Premier and her finance minister had said over the past year on this issue. In April 2014, the finance minister said at the Economic Club, "Continuing public ownership, however, remains a key priority...."

"We will not do what the previous PC government did ... with the fire sale of Highway 407."

After the provincial election, the Premier continued to deny that the selling of Hydro One was part of their plan by blowing off questions in this House. She has said, "It must actually be very hard for the leader of the third party to ask these questions. She knows that we're not selling off the assets.... She knows that we are keeping these assets in public hands...."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems that, like my colleagues and I have been saying all along from the beginning, this government has been planning to sell off Hydro One and our public assets this entire time. They are making deals in the dark. There is no accountability and transparency to Ontarians.

I get calls every day and emails to my office from constituents in London-Fanshawe but also from Ontarians from across the province on their opposition to the sale of Hydro One. I'm sure all the members here in this House also get these emails and phone calls. So I'm not sure where the stubborn attitude of this government is coming from when it comes to the sale of Hydro One.

This bill makes it easier for the privatization of public assets in this province, and I cannot support this bill that endangers the future of our generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill, Speaker. The question I ask is: Who will this government listen to? It would be nice if they could answer. Who will you listen to, if not the 83% of Ontarians who are opposed to selling off Hydro One, if not to the voices across the way who are trying to get across to you that selling a public asset that is a revenue-generating asset isn't the right way to go when you're talking about building Ontario up? You're building Ontario down as far as revenues that are coming in, and you're putting people backwards, not forwards, when it comes to selling off a public asset.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The member from London-Fanshawe, in a very thoughtful way, of course, put her comments on the record regarding Bill 135. Somebody was asking us who we're listening to. Well, I think one of the great sources was a book that was written by a former leader of the New Democratic Party, one Howard Hampton. I remember he had a book called Public Power, and in that Public Power he talked at length about the role that private entities might provide and play in the role of Ontario in providing power. In fact, if I'm correct, between 1990 and 1995, when the NDP had the privilege of forming government in the province of Ontario, they procured a number of private power options during their time in power.

So I always think it's appropriate to make sure that we look at things in the historical context in terms of policy here in Ontario.

But, more importantly, one of the things that I think is really important that's contained in this bill is water efficiency standards. I was saying to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, in a speech that I delivered last Monday morning, that the two great policy issues of the 21st century will be clean water and food security. One of the ways that we can go about our water security, of course, is implementing water efficiency standards not only to our buildings but our appliances.

We can talk about all aspects of the bill, but if you're really looking at the future of humanity, one of the great things we need to do is to be water-efficient. Look at the state of California today. Their water table has gone down dramatically after a series of droughts that have hit that state. Many of the water courses in California have now turned into salt flats, and they can't service their agricultural sector. So a very important aspect of this bill is water efficiency.

1750

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Well, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me, and thank the member for London-Fanshawe for her thoughtful presentation this afternoon on Bill 135.

Of course, we're coming to the end of a very busy legislative week and it's good to see some of the members still here to debate Bill 135. I'm not sure whether there's going to be the opportunity for another speech this afternoon. That will be in your hands and you have the discretion, Mr. Speaker. But I certainly do want to acknowledge the member for London-Fanshawe for her remarks.

During the course of this debate, there have been a number of related issues brought up. The government has taken credit for the closure of the coal plants. There was even a statement made this afternoon suggesting that the official opposition, the Progressive Conservative Party, was opposed to the closure of coal plants. That statement

is absolutely false. In fact, in 2002, as has been pointed out, the environment minister of the day, Elizabeth Witmer, was the first environment minister to announce the closure of a coal-fired generating station in Ontario. That was the Lakeview Generating Station. It was certainly our position in 2003 in the election that we would, in a thoughtful and responsible way, close the coal-fired generating capacity in the province of Ontario over a period of years. But we were truthful and honest: We said it couldn't be done immediately—couldn't be done responsibly immediately—and in fact it would take until 2014-15, as I recall was the statement of the Minister of Energy of the day.

The Liberals, in opposition at that time, claimed that they could close the coal-fired generating stations by 2007. That promise was broken. I think over a period of years there were two or three promises broken in terms of the time frame for the closure of the coal-fired plants.

But I would also add that the member for Mississauga South, Margaret Marland, our former colleague, had worked for years to draw attention to the need to close the Lakeview Generating Station. So our party has a long history of responding to this issue in the appropriate way. I don't think that the government seems to appreciate it, and they need to be reminded of it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House and respond to the remarks by my colleague from London—Fanshawe. I might not get another chance because you never know if this bill might not come up again in time allocation, so I'd like to respond to the Minister of Agriculture.

Water efficiency and energy efficiency is a huge challenge, but it's not the biggest challenge. I'd like to make that clear. This bill is all about transferring power from the public, the power of public scrutiny, to the Minister of Energy. That's what this bill is about.

But there is a bit about water efficiency. You know who were the first people who brought this to my attention? It wasn't the minister. It was the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance. Remember them? They brought us nice poinsettias. Do you remember them?

They were the first ones who said, "You know what? The government is thinking about putting regulations on how much power and how much water buildings can use, and we're worried that greenhouses are going to be involved in that." They said that they don't have a problem with the scrutiny, but the one thing that the government has to keep in mind is that efficiency is also about how much that building produces. Greenhouse A could use more water than Greenhouse B, but if Greenhouse A produces twice as much production than Greenhouse B, it's actually much more efficient, both with energy and with water.

If we're going to talk about energy efficiency and water efficiency, we have to look at the whole picture, and not just create regulations where we don't really know what is going to be the result of those regulations, which this government has done, like with smart meters.

Smart meters aren't doing what they were proposed to do when this government put them in and we don't want to go around the same with energy, with water meters that don't take into account how much is actually produced by a given building.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's a privilege to be able to stand and speak for a couple of minutes about Bill 135, and to respond and make some comments on what I'm hearing from members opposite.

I'm always intrigued when members of the official opposition talk about how anti-coal they were, because I remember those days, Mr. Speaker, living where I lived, north of Toronto, watching the sky turn more and more yellow as coal-fired plants kicked in.

I think there's a statistic out there that says that during the PC era, coal use went up 127% in this province, as we burned coal furiously to make electricity. I'm so glad that this government is the government that ended that and that this government is the one that made sure we will not burn coal to produce energy anymore.

Just to carry on and to change the topic slightly: One of the things that really intrigues me and I'd really like to support in this bill is water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances. But before I get there, because the Minister of Agriculture is in the House: I'm a big supporter of exporting water, provided it's in the form of processed Ontario vegetables. I know that we all would have to agree with that.

When we look at, as consumers—and I have a background in consumer advocacy. We used to spend a lot of time helping consumers make wise choices when they purchased appliances. One of the things that they needed to look at was energy efficiency. What I like about this bill is that it also talks about water efficiency because that's just as important in today's world.

The final thing that I want to talk about, just for a split second, is that, as a municipal councillor, the research that we did would tell us, and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change would tell us as well, that the biggest energy use of North American municipalities is moving water.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for London—Fanshawe, you now have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to thank the members who contributed to my debate: the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the member from Wellington—Haltoun Hills, the always wonderful member from Timiskaming—Cochrane and the member from Newmarket—Aurora.

One of the questions in my speech—and the minister actually spoke to it—was, "Who will they listen to?" There have been stakeholders who have spoken out on this issue. I don't know if they've listened to them, but I'm going to read some of their statements.

Energy consultant and lawyer George Vegh wrote a thorough review of the governance changes in Bill 135. He says that they "could lead one to wonder whether

there are any checks and balances left in the system at all.” He wrote a thorough review. I would ask the members of the government, if they haven’t read his review, to google it online and read it.

Energy consultant Tom Adams is fiercely opposed to the further erosion of the independent OEB/IESO authority in Bill 135 and the mandatory efficiency closures—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’m so glad that the member from Eglinton–Lawrence has decided to join us. He’s always a joy to have in this House.

Let’s Fix Hydro is another group that’s deeply concerned about the energy governance changes in Bill 135.

As the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about, it’s a shift in power. It’s a shift to allow more privatization to happen. It’s the wrong decision and it’s the wrong bill. We don’t agree with it, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 30, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
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Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
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Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

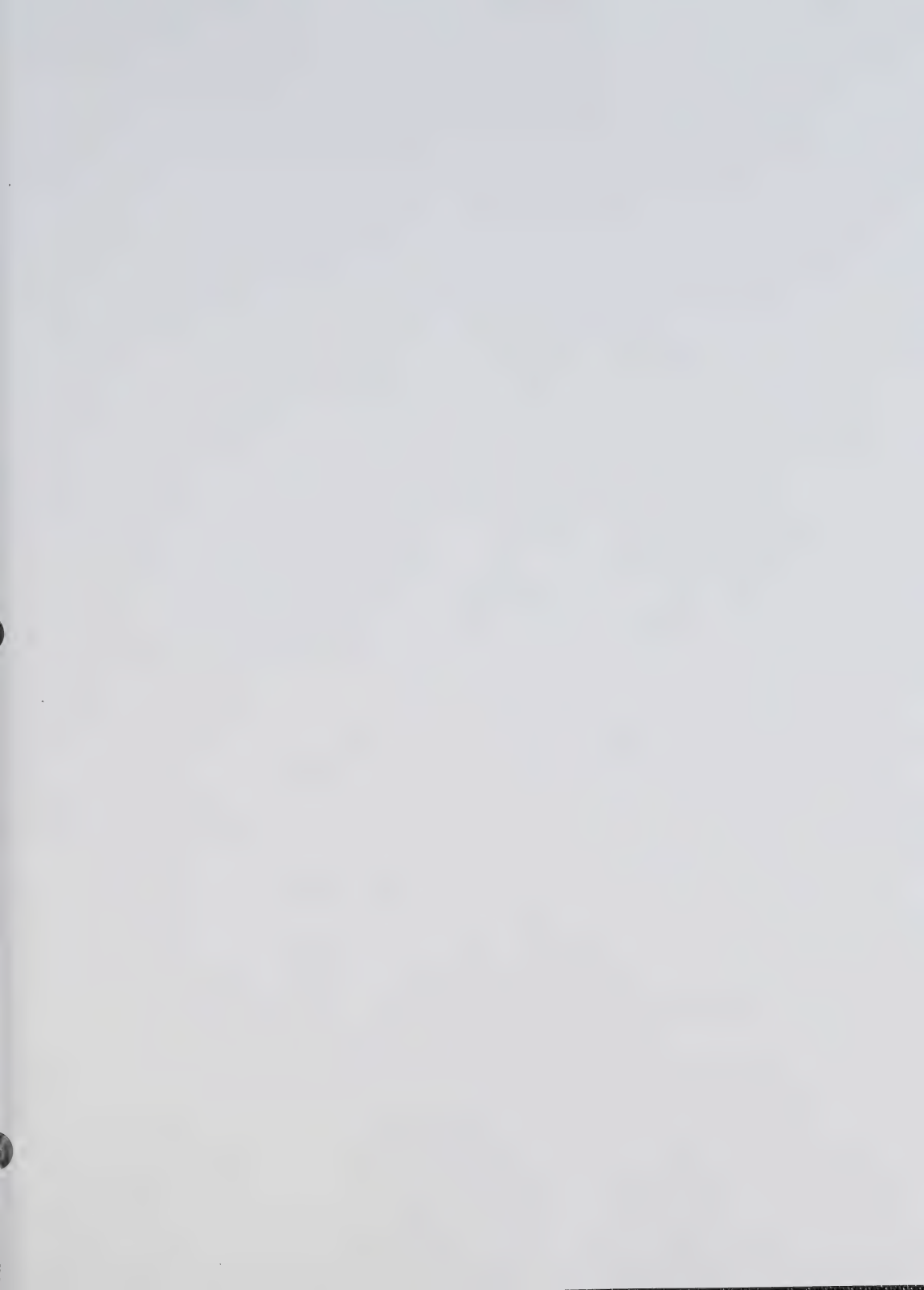
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Glenn Thibeault
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sexuel**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch



Lyme disease

Mr. Michael Mantha	6746
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6746

Visitors

Mr. Norm Miller	6747
Hon. Michael Gravelle	6747
Ms. Soo Wong	6747
Mr. Percy Hatfield	6747
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	6747

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Time allocation

Motion agreed to	6748
------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Charles Sousa	6748
Ms. Harinder Malhi	6748
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	6748
Mr. Han Dong	6748
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	6748
Mr. Jack MacLaren	6748

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Municipal land transfer tax

Mrs. Julia Munro	6748
------------------------	------

Northern economy

Ms. Sarah Campbell	6748
--------------------------	------

Holodomor

Mr. Yvan Baker	6749
----------------------	------

Tamil community

Mr. Jack MacLaren	6749
-------------------------	------

Attawapiskat hospital

Mr. Gilles Bisson	6750
-------------------------	------

Interfaith Refugee Resettlers

Mr. Chris Ballard	6750
-------------------------	------

Thomas Fleming

Mr. Tim Hudak	6750
---------------------	------

Hate crimes

Ms. Harinder Malhi	6751
--------------------------	------

Lake Shore Santa Claus Parade

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	6751
----------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Estimates

Miss Monique Taylor	6751
Report deemed received	6751

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2015, Bill 151, Mr. Murray / Loi de 2015 favorisant un Ontario sans déchets, projet de loi 151, M. Murray

First reading agreed to	6752
Hon. Glen R. Murray	6752

MOTIONS

Order of business

Hon. James J. Bradley	6752
Motion agreed to	6753

Committee sittings

Hon. James J. Bradley	6753
Motion agreed to	6753

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Economic outlook and fiscal review / Perspectives économiques et revue financière

Hon. Charles Sousa	6753
Mr. Victor Fedeli	6756
Ms. Catherine Fife	6757

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Health care funding

Mrs. Julia Munro	6757
------------------------	------

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor	6757
---------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mrs. Julia Munro	6758
------------------------	------

Highway improvement

Mr. Taras Natyshak	6758
--------------------------	------

Water fluoridation

Mr. Han Dong	6758
--------------------	------

Health care funding

Mr. Norm Miller	6758
-----------------------	------

Health care funding

Miss Monique Taylor	6759
---------------------------	------

Water fluoridation	
Mr. Bob Delaney	6759
Privatisation des biens publics	
M. Taras Natyshak	6760
Lung health	
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	6760

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS /
AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC
ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS**

Disclosure of Information Relating to the Protection of Children Act, 2015, Bill 146, Miss Taylor / Loi de 2015 sur la divulgation de renseignements concernant la protection des enfants, projet de loi 146, Mme Taylor	
Miss Monique Taylor	6760
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	6762
Mr. Todd Smith	6763
Mr. Taras Natyshak	6764
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	6765
Mr. Rick Nicholls	6766
Mr. John Vanthof	6766
Miss Monique Taylor	6767
Smoke-Free Schools Act, 2015, Bill 139, Mr. Smith / Loi de 2015 favorisant des écoles sans fumée, projet de loi 139, M. Smith	
Mr. Todd Smith	6768
Mr. Wayne Gates	6769
Mr. Han Dong	6771
Mr. Tim Hudak	6772
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	6773
Mr. Toby Barrett	6773
Mr. Todd Smith	6774
Smart Grid Cyber Security and Privacy Act, 2015, Bill 140, Mr. Tabuns / Loi de 2015 sur la cybersécurité du réseau intelligent et la protection de la vie privée, projet de loi 140, M. Tabuns	
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6774
Mr. Bob Delaney	6776
Mr. Tim Hudak	6778
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6779
Mr. Todd Smith	6780

Ms. Peggy Sattler	6780
Mr. Rick Nicholls	6781
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6782
Disclosure of Information Relating to the Protection of Children Act, 2015, Bill 146, Miss Taylor / Loi de 2015 sur la divulgation de renseignements concernant la protection des enfants, projet de loi 146, Mme Taylor	
Second reading agreed to	6782
Smoke-Free Schools Act, 2015, Bill 139, Mr. Smith / Loi de 2015 favorisant des écoles sans fumée, projet de loi 139, M. Smith	
Second reading agreed to	6782
Smart Grid Cyber Security and Privacy Act, 2015, Bill 140, Mr. Tabuns / Loi de 2015 sur la cybersécurité du réseau intelligent et la protection de la vie privée, projet de loi 140, M. Tabuns	
Second reading agreed to	6783

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, Bill 135, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2015 modifiant des lois sur l'énergie, projet de loi 135, M. Chiarelli	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6783
Mrs. Cristina Martins	6784
Mr. Todd Smith	6784
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6785
Mrs. Laura Albanese	6785
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6785
Mrs. Julia Munro	6786
Mr. Peter Tabuns	6787
Hon. Michael Coteau	6787
Mrs. Gila Martow	6788
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6788
Mrs. Julia Munro	6788
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6789
Hon. Jeff Leal	6790
Mr. Ted Arnott	6790
Mr. John Vanthof	6791
Mr. Chris Ballard	6791
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6791
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	6792

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 26 November 2015 / Jeudi 26 novembre 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation

Mr. John Vanthof.....	6725
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6727
Vote deferred.....	6728

Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015, Bill 112, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2015 pour renforcer la protection des consommateurs et la surveillance du réseau d'électricité, projet de loi 112, M. Chiarelli

Mr. Bob Delaney.....	6728
Mr. Norm Miller	6731
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6732
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	6734

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Jeff Leal.....	6734
Mr. Han Dong	6735
Mr. Monte McNaughton	6735
Hon. Michael Coteau	6735
Mrs. Cristina Martins	6735
Ms. Sylvia Jones	6735
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6735
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	6735
Hon. Michael Coteau	6735
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	6735
Mr. John Yakabuski	6735
Miss Monique Taylor	6735
Mr. Todd Smith.....	6735
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	6735

Wearing of football jersey

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	6735
------------------------	------

Visitor

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6736
------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Health care funding

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	6736
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6736
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6737

Climate change

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	6737
------------------------	------

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6737
------------------------------	------

Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	6738
--------------------------	------

Energy policies

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	6738
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6738

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	6739
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6739
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	6739

Economic outlook

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	6740
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6740

Collective bargaining

Ms. Cindy Forster.....	6740
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	6741

Amateur sport

Mr. Chris Ballard	6741
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	6741

Environmental protection

Mr. Ted Arnott	6742
Hon. Brad Duguid	6742

Disaster relief

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	6743
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	6743

Agriculture industry

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	6743
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	6743

Health care

Mr. Norm Miller.....	6744
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6744

Health care

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6744
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6744

Research and innovation

Ms. Soo Wong.....	6745
Hon. Brad Duguid	6745

Human trafficking

Ms. Laurie Scott	6745
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	6746
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	6746

Continued on inside back cover

No. 127A



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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 30 November 2015

Lundi 30 novembre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 novembre 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Most folks know that the Ontario Lung Association is in the House. What they may not also know is that at tonight's reception, Tom Paterson of Junction Brewery is going to be hosting a beer-tasting. Please come out and say yay to Junction Brewery.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to introduce today, in the legislative gallery, Bev Black of St. Catharines, who is here with the lung association.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure to welcome the president of ACORN Canada, Marva Burnett, and the ACORN representatives who will be joining us here today. As you know, Speaker, ACORN is the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my distinct pleasure to welcome my friends Mr. and Mrs. Zamani, who are visiting the House today. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: On behalf of my colleague the MPP for Windsor West, I'd like to welcome and point out that legislative page Prasanna Mohile is our page captain today, and I'd like to introduce his proud family members who will be joining us: his dad, Sanjay Mohile; his mom, Arundhati; sister Prachi; aunt Rupa Haldavnekar; and grandma Madhuri Mohile. Welcome to you all. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Today marks the end of Lung Month, a month when we celebrate everything to do with breathing. To close off Lung Month, the Ontario Lung Association is here and I'd also like to welcome them. They are hosting a reception tonight, and you're all invited to come celebrate in rooms 228/230. They're also here meeting with MPPs and staff about how we can better protect Ontarians' lung health. Please join me, once again, in welcoming the Ontario Lung Association, their lung ambassadors and volunteers from across Ontario.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, I would like to congratulate our page captain today, Keana Caverio. We welcome her mother, Yanet Caverio, her father, Larry Caverio, her sister Naliani Caverio, cousin Lianna Lopez and her god-mother Vanessa Lopez. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We're going to be joined, very shortly, by the grade 5 class from St. Marguerite d'You-

ville public school, from my great riding of Oak Ridges-Markham. They will be joined by Zoe Vacilotto, a student, who is the daughter of Maria Papadopoulos, who worked here at Queen's Park for many years.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have some visitors from the Association of Ontario Midwives with us today. This is Liza and Steve van de Hoef, as well as Heather Harding. They are here for the campaign to end mandatory newborn eye prophylaxis. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I wish to introduce two members of Parliament from the regional assembly of the Azores visiting us from Portugal today: Duarte Freitas and José Andrade, accompanied by Paula Medeiros from the Portuguese consulate in Toronto. I want to wish them a warm welcome here to Queen's Park. Bem-vindos.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to introduce Scott Hickey, vice-president of corporate communications and public affairs for Dynacare. It's nice to see you here.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to welcome Michael Voro-bej, who has come in today to give support to my tipping bill, which is having hearings this afternoons. Thanks, and welcome.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to take this opportunity as well to welcome the Ontario Lung Association and, specifically, Kati Wallace, who is a constituent of mine from St. Paul's.

Of course, I'd also like to welcome the delegation here from the Association of Ontario Midwives.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I just wanted to congratulate Rob Jamieson, the new president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association—actually from Barrie. He's not here today, but I know he's with us in spirit. Congratulations on that new endeavour.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to congratulate the Ottawa Redblacks on a formidable season. They have only been a CFL team for the past two years and they made it all the way to the Grey Cup last night, in a heartbreaking loss in the last five minutes. We were that close, not only to being the greatest province in football, but definitely Ottawa, we can say, is the greatest city for football in this entire province. I know that I join members of all parties from across Ontario in saying thank you to the Redblacks for an excellent season.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last Thursday's fall economic statement just

goes to show that there is no reason that Ontarians should trust this government's numbers.

The government took a billion dollars from the reserves and another \$1.1 billion from the sale of Hydro One. The deficit is actually \$2.1 billion higher than this government is willing to admit.

As the Toronto Star's Martin Regg Cohn said, the government under-promises and tries to claim they over-perform. He said that Ontario "is a chronic underperformer, and the government is an ongoing overspender."

Mr. Speaker, will the government finally admit that they have no plan, and no realistic expectation to balance their budget in 2018?

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, our plan is fundamentally different from their plan, although I must say that I'm not even sure that there is a plan.

Year after year, we have beaten our deficit—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll be looking to both sides to start quiet.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have beaten our deficit targets year over year. We will continue to do so.

We have been very clear that net revenues from asset sales like the Hydro One IPO are being placed in the Trillium Trust. In fact, last spring, we proposed an amendment to the 2015 budget, in committee, that would formalize that all net proceeds would be contributed to the Trillium Trust. Do you know what happened? Both the PCs and the NDP voted against it, which is why it's in this fall—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: I've got some unfortunate news for the Acting Premier: You can't spend the same money twice.

The fall economic statement confirmed what the opposition has been saying all along: The sale of Hydro One was not for infrastructure. We've known all along that the Liberals used this money to simply pay for their own scandal, waste and mismanagement. Some \$1.1 billion from the sale of Hydro One went straight into general revenue. Oddly enough, that's exactly the same amount the Liberals wasted on the gas plant scandal.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the government just come clean? The only reason they sold Hydro One was to make up for their own incompetence and waste. Come clean and admit that's what you did.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's really important to also point out that the contingency fund remains what it was. This notion that we somehow used the contingency fund to bring down the deficit is simply untrue. I would love to see the evidence you have that would demonstrate that that has been a change.

We are committed to spending more on infrastructure. This is a clear direction this government is going in. We have a plan to get there. The plan does include asset sales; it includes broadening the ownership of Hydro One, because that's what the people of this province elected us to do. We are moving forward on our mandate to build Ontario up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The government's numbers just don't make sense. The Acting Premier, everyone understands this is a shell game.

Over the next three years, the government is predicting \$8 billion more in revenue than the Financial Accountability Officer has forecasted. I know who I trust. I trust the independent officer, not the government spin machine. The gap is real, and the fall economic statement clearly says that the Hydro One revenue will be used to fill the gap, an \$8-billion gap. They expect to get \$9 billion from the sale of Hydro One. I hardly think this is a coincidence. We all know what's happening here.

Will the government admit that they are using the next portion of the Hydro One sale to plug their \$8-billion gap? Tell us the answer, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have non-tax revenue from capital gains, on assets and otherwise. That's reflected as such, and we made it very clear that we're dedicating every dollar that is the net result of these assets to the Trillium Trust.

Furthermore, we have over \$120 billion in revenue. We are not relying on assets to manage the deficit; we're relying on economic growth. That's why we're reinvesting the money: to create even more wealth for the people of Ontario.

The member opposite is actually double-counting when he talks about reserves, Mr. Speaker. I think they need to get their act together, in terms of the principles of accounting, on this very issue.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Treasury Board president. Last week, the finance minister robbed the sale of Hydro One, intended for infrastructure monies, to pay down the deficit. Unfortunately, that type of creative financing is unsustainable and, I dare say, dishonest. Don't just take my word for it; take the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Certainly. Withdrawn, Speaker.

Don't just take my word for it; take the Financial Accountability Officer's. It means that the Treasury Board president should be following the mandate letter assigned to her to reduce the size and cost of government, but that's barely mentioned in the fall economic statement.

Why? Is it because the President of the Treasury Board has failed to hold the line on government spending?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In fact, earlier this month, the Financial Accountability Officer affirmed our lowered 2015-16 deficit target of \$8.5 billion without factoring the Hydro One IPO into his figures. We at the Treasury Board are working very hard to keep program spending low. We have to make sure that we're getting the best value for every dollar we are spending.

What's fascinating to me is that what we are hearing from the opposition over and over again is, "Spend more." You want us to increase compensation to physicians, you want us to—every day we hear about expenditures you want us to make. Yet, now we're hearing that we're spending too much.

The fact is that the Treasury Board is going through a line-by-line review of every ministry—every program in every ministry—to ensure that we're getting the best value for those dollars.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Financial Accountability Officer actually said we were going through short-term gain for long-term pain. That's what he said. I remember seeing it. You yourself said on W5, "We're out of money."

Now, Ontarians can't afford any new taxes, so the only hope, in order for this government to balance the budget and ensure sustainable health care and education, is through a more efficient government and for you to actually do your job. But that's impossible when the government takes its so-called net zeros in contract negotiations and applies that money to higher salaries rather than to the deficit. There is no discipline on that side of the House.

Will the Treasury Board president explain why her department has lost control of government spending and is not doing its job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is simply wrong. In fact, we are looking at an average 0.9% increase in spending. That is significantly below the rate of inflation. I don't know where the member opposite would want to cut more. As I've said, every day we hear that they want us to spend more on their particular projects.

We have a very clear path to balance. We are on that path. We are making difficult decisions, but we are determined to achieve balance by 2017-18. It will take a variety of approaches to get us there, but we are committed to doing exactly that, while we protect the services that matter to the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They're clearly not protecting the services that matter the most to Ontarians. Look at the illegal strikes in education; look at the health care cuts that my caucus has been raising in this assembly.

If you want to talk about who is wrong, I want to know if you were right or if you were misquoted on W5 when you said, "We're out of money." You can't have it

both ways. Your inaction and your lack of discipline speak for themselves. It is not leadership; it is reckless. This government has specialized in mediocrity. You have compromised the province's credit rating and made life unaffordable for Ontarians, and you have only yourself to blame. The budget will not balance itself.

Will the Treasury Board president admit here today in this place that lack of discipline in her department and across government is what really is in store for Ontarians in the next number of years?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think this is a question that maybe should go down in history as taking two paths in one question. You've got to choose a lane. On one hand, you're saying, "You're spending too much," and on the other—the very same question—you're saying, "You're not spending enough."

I really do think that the party opposite needs to get their act together. There was a time when we knew exactly where they stood, and that was slash and burn, fire 100,000 people. We're hearing about a kinder, gentler party, Speaker, but at the core, there is nothing that has changed over there.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Page 100 of the fall economic statement shows that the money from the Hydro One sell-off is going toward government revenue, but the Premier promised that selling off Hydro One would build transit and infrastructure.

1050

Of course, we know that the selling of Hydro One was never about building anything. The Liberals have counted the money once for transit in the Trillium Trust, and a second time against the deficit. Speaker, ask any Ontarian and they'll tell you that you can't spend the same dollar twice. You can only spend a dollar once.

Can the Acting Premier explain how the Liberals are taking a dollar and counting it twice?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me explain that we have capital gains on assets and we have a number of initiatives that happen throughout the budget cycle. Over \$124 billion in revenue occurs. In this particular case, you have an asset that creates a gain. We have to reflect it as non-taxable revenue. We have also put in place a dedicated Trillium Trust that ensures that the value—the net gain—is invested into that trust to be reinvested into new assets, Mr. Speaker.

We are not relying on assets in order to manage our deficit. What we are doing is growing our economy and enabling us to add more revenue, more activity, and we are controlling our spending. We are the leanest government in all of Canada because of the efforts that we are

taking and that the president of this Treasury Board has been enacting all this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government's own fiscal update says the increase in revenue "largely reflects the ... recent Hydro One IPO." The money from the sell-off of Hydro One isn't going toward building transit and infrastructure. It's going to actually balance the books for one year. The sell-off of Hydro One isn't raising the money the Liberals promised. It's not building infrastructure that they promised to the people of Ontario.

Will the Acting Premier and her government be breaking the promise they made to Ontarians to build transit just so they can balance the budget, Speaker?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've just enacted further regulation around the Trillium Trust in order to ensure that the lands from Seaton and Lakeview, and head office buildings that are also not as productive—that we look at initiating those gains to be invested into the Trillium Trust. We stipulated it very clearly into the act. That is exactly what's happening. Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite may want to talk about the fact that she doesn't like the notion of us taking an agency or a company that is underperforming, making it better, creating greater value, netting tremendous gains for the province of Ontario and dedicating its gain into the Trillium Trust for reinvestment into our economy. That is her choice, but we are going to continue to invest in our economy, to grow our economy, and enable us to have greater revenues overall and greater productivity and prosperity for all people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals promised that the Hydro One money would go into the Trillium Trust to pay for infrastructure. Instead, it's going into general revenue so that the Liberals can show a one-time smaller deficit in this year.

Will this Acting Premier finally admit that selling Hydro One was never about infrastructure? And can she tell us which of the transit projects that the Liberals list off continually in this House she will be cancelling in order to balance the budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have stipulated that we're going to be spending over \$134 billion in infrastructure. We have identified in the fall economic statement a number of projects that are well under way. Over 200 more projects have occurred. This transaction also enabled us to pay down debt by \$1 billion.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are acting prudently, we are taking assets, making certain that we're able to achieve greater value of those assets, and reinvesting. Of course, you have to recognize that gain as a non-taxable revenue. It's exactly what we've done in this budget. We've been very upfront throughout and going forward.

We are going to continue doing everything that's necessary to invest in our economy, to create even more value. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, let me say it again: We're not relying on assets to control our deficit. We are relying on the \$124 billion of other revenue that is generating wealth for the province of Ontario.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. On the very first page of the fall economic update, it says that if revenue growth is slower than expected, "the government will need to consider other tools." Does "other tools" included further sales of revenue-generating assets and even deeper cuts to health care and education?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's prudent, of course, for us to take consideration of all the tools that are available to the province and to a government, and frankly, Ontario has a lot of flexibility. We have more arrows in our quiver than other provinces, because they have already taken some of those tools into action.

We are relying only on going after those who don't pay appropriately. We're going after tax avoidance measures in the economy. We're going after the underground economy, which, by the way, has netted an additional \$224 million more as a result of those initiatives.

We're also controlling our debt. We now are paying \$140 million less than we had anticipated because we're borrowing \$25 billion less as a result of the actions that we're taking.

Those are the initiatives that we're taking, those are the tools that we're looking forward to enacting and ensuring that everybody pays their fair share.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If there are so many arrows in the quiver, they should have skipped over the sell-off of Hydro One because virtually nobody in Ontario wanted them to use that arrow.

Thursday's fall economic statement shows job creation projections are down by 70,000 jobs over the next four years. That's like the entire city of Sarnia not being able to find a job. With a competitive dollar, we should have actually seen some job growth by now, not less growth and fewer jobs. Selling Hydro One is not going to create jobs here in the province of Ontario. Privatizing other assets will not create more growth.

Will the Acting Premier rule out selling more revenue-generating assets?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: Ontario and Ontarians have been doing a tremendous job of promoting our economy. In fact, Ontario now leads Canada in economic growth, and our unemployment rate is down to 6.8%—below the national average. Furthermore, we have over 560,000 new jobs since the depths of the recession because of the diversified economy that we have been employing and initiating.

Furthermore, I said very clearly that when we look at our assets, we look at those that are underperforming and not creating greater value. That is why LCBO and OPG

and some other assets are not being used: because they provide greater value. Hydro One had an opportunity to make more value for the province of Ontario, and it did, well beyond every expectation that most have had. The market bore a strong valuation. We still own 84% of that operation, which is now greater in value than it was even three weeks ago. We'll continue to do that to promote more value for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The value went to their friends; it didn't go to the people of Ontario. That's what this finance minister is not telling the public.

Selling Hydro One will slow revenue growth. That is a fact.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development, second time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario's independent FAO shows that starting next year, the sale of Hydro One will start costing us money. That's going to slow revenue growth for this province. The fall economic update says that's exactly what's going to open the door to the necessity of new revenue tools or more revenue tools to be undertaken by this government.

So why is the Liberal government setting up Ontario families for more sell-offs and deeper cuts in the future?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The majority of Hydro One is still owned by Ontarians. The government of Ontario owns 84% of this company still today. As we proceed forward, 40% of this last IPO went to Ontarians, broader, in the retail sector. And pension companies, which the member opposite, staff and others are reliant upon, also are owners of some of these shares.

Going forward, the people of Ontario indirectly or directly still own a great part of this company, which has now been improved because of the actions we've taken. That's exactly what we're talking about. More importantly, it's about reinvesting into our economy, reinvesting in new assets, reinvesting in transit in Hamilton, where the member opposite is from. She would probably cut those very initiatives if she did not find sources of revenue and capital to make it so.

That's exactly what we've done. We've stipulated that, and we've actually rolled out a whole list of projects under way. That's what this is about.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Acting Premier. For months now, the government has climbed onto its high horse and said that the Hydro One sale was going to pay for infrastructure—right up until last Thursday, though, when they couldn't hide the truth any longer. A background document the government handed out for the fall economic statement said, "The improvement in the deficit projection for 2015-16 is mainly the result of the government's progress on the asset optimization strategy outlined in the 2015 budget

related to the recent Hydro One initial public offering...." The only thing they've sold is Hydro One.

1100

The Premier, the Minister of Energy and the Deputy Premier have all just been contradicted by the finance minister. My question is: Would they like to correct their record, or are they saying the finance minister wouldn't tell them what he was using the Hydro One money for?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have assets. We have ongoing operations of government. We're trying to maximize value. We've very clearly stipulated that the asset gain from Hydro One, which is greater than even anticipated, is being reflected as a non-tax revenue, as it must. These are basic accounting principles.

We also went further and said we're dedicating all of that gain into the Trillium Trust, to dedicate those revenues to create even more by reinvesting in new infrastructure projects, that being public transit, including those opportunities—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, second time.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —communities. It talks about roads and bridges and expansions to various communities that will benefit from the redeployment of these assets to create new value for Ontarians. That's what we've done, and we've been very clear that that has been the case.

Furthermore, it also talks about the fact that we're paying less interest. It talks about the fact that we are collecting more revenues in other areas. That is ultimately how we're getting to balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, the flakes of snow haven't really even started to fly here in Toronto yet, but there has been a snow job going on for months over on that side of the House.

Finance tells us one thing, but we get another thing here in the House. Even the finance minister couldn't quite explain how money could be going to the deficit when ministers of the crown repeatedly told the House it would be spent on infrastructure. Maybe he's just sick of playing Pinocchio to Ed Clark's Geppetto.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

All the government has done here is temporarily plugged a \$1.1-billion hole. It's going to reappear again next year, just in time for them to sell more Hydro One shares.

Will the Acting Premier just admit that the money was never going to go to infrastructure, or is she just waiting for Ed Clark's latest memo too?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the only people who are double-counting here are members of the opposition when they claim that the reserve is being used twice, when in fact that's not the case.

Furthermore, we've been clear that non-tax revenue has to be reflected as revenue. That's exactly what we've

done. And we've said that we're going to invest it, and we are.

Listen, on pages 27 and 28, we offer just a small amount of those projects that are under way for the benefit of communities like the member's own, so that we can greatly appreciate the value for our economy and for our families in our communities.

By the way, let's be clear that Ontarians and Ontario still hold a substantive amount of Hydro One, which is more valuable than it was before. And we've made it very clear that no one person or company can own more than 10% of Hydro One. We will still retain a greater degree of ownership, greater opportunities for revenue that's being sourced from a better company, and we're generating further revenue from reinvesting in our economy. We've stipulated that very clearly in our FES in that regard.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. In the last fiscal year, the government forced Ontario's electricity consumers to pay \$956 million in debt retirement charges on their electricity bills. These charges were supposed to pay down the residual stranded debt left over from the old Ontario Hydro. Instead, last week we found that these charges paid down only \$400 million of the residual stranded debt. What did the government do with the remaining \$556 million?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite may know, there is stranded debt. That's the legacy debt that was left over from the dismantling of the old Ontario Hydro. That Conservative legacy left \$20 billion in stranded debt. We've been paying that down regularly over time, and it will continue even still. Notwithstanding that, we've taken an amount from the IPO that's being applied to the residual stranded debt. The other components of it go to actually pay direct debt from the OEFC, and we will continue to do that, as we must and as we will.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Acting Premier: Mr. Peter Kormos would have said "horse feathers" to that.

Rather than be upfront with Ontarians, this government is rewriting the laws just so they can play accounting games. First, they changed the law so that they can give IOUs instead of cash to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. to pay the Hydro debt. Then they rewrote the law so that they can put \$2.2 billion in non-cash benefits into the Trillium Trust, so-called benefits that don't provide a single penny in actual spendable cash for infrastructure.

Finally, they rewrote the law so that they can continue collecting \$600 million a year in debt retirement charges without putting it towards debt.

Instead of rewriting laws and playing accounting games, why won't the government just admit that the Hydro One sell-off has nothing to do with infrastructure

or debt repayment? Why is the Liberal government taking money from the electricity ratepayers to play accounting games with its books for political purposes?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's interesting; the member opposite now does not cite the FAO and his explanation of residual stranded debt, and the stranded debt—he very clearly outlines that the government of Ontario has been paying it down, that there is a great degree of uncertainty as to what will happen next. We have applied all of those debt retirement charges directly to residual stranded debt, and that's how it's happening. It has been going down. As a result of what we've done more recently, we've been able to garner even more opportunity to pay down debt. We've paid down debt by another billion dollars.

We will continue to apply debt to the OEFC and the component of stranded debt, as required, will continue to go down from the sources that we are applying. But we are very, very clear that the debt retirement charge for residential will be eliminated by the end of this year, and we're eliminating it for all industrial and businesses as well by April 2018, nine months ahead of schedule, so that they have certainty and further reductions in their cost overall.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. This ministry has to balance the priorities of communities, industry and our natural heritage, which includes the important role of environmental stewardship.

The forests in this province are important in the fight against global warming. We know that forests capture, convert and retain carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that significantly contributes to climate change. Ontario's forests have an important role to play when it comes to our fight against climate change, as nearly 70%, or 93 million hectares, of our province are covered in forest.

Could the minister please tell us what steps Ontario is taking to preserve our forests while balancing the need for wood products?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for the question. The stewardship of Ontario's forest is a core component of my ministry's responsibilities. Through legislation like the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, we require that forests are managed to meet the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Our province works with the forestry industry to ensure responsible harvesting of the province's forests. We do so by setting annual limits on how much industry is allowed to harvest, as well as ensuring that forestry on crown lands takes place within areas designated for managed forestry. Even within the managed forests, six million hectares are protected areas where forestry cannot occur. Beyond the managed forests, we've protected an additional 225,000 square kilometres of northern Ontario through the Far North Act.

We also protect Ontario's forest biodiversity, increasing the forests' capacity to sequester greenhouse gases.

The renewal of forests is a priority. Between 2003 and 2013, licence holders have planted more than one billion trees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for showing us how Ontario is working to preserve this very important resource while supporting an industry that directly and indirectly employs nearly 170,000 people in this province.

While it is important to maintain the forests Ontario already has, I think most Ontarians would agree that meeting the challenges of climate change requires great leadership. Our newly announced climate change strategy sets a long-term vision for this province that calls for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

There are few initiatives that match that kind of ambition, both in long-term thinking and capacity to address greenhouse gases—as trees do. Could the minister please share with the House his ministry's strategy to expand forest coverage in Ontario and explain our global contribution in capturing carbon dioxide?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, thanks to the member from Kitchener Centre.

Our ministry is doing its part to contribute to the global efforts on climate change by working in partnership with Forests Ontario and over 65 conservation agency partners across Ontario to deliver our government's 50 Million Tree program.

This program will see the planting of 50 million trees and the establishment of new forests on suitable private rural and urban lands across Ontario by 2025. By doing so, we anticipate being able to remove 6.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by 2050. To support healthy forest environments in a variety of settings across the province, our goal is to plant one million trees in urban areas, working with municipalities and other partners. We've planted nearly 20 million trees since we started this program.

1110

With the continued support of our partners and Ontarians at large, we're on target to meet our goals. On a final note, I encourage Ontarians to look into helping us through one of those partners. The program offers subsidies. It's a program that we're very proud of and look forward to continuing in the years ahead.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: To the Minister of Transportation: Last week we learned that since the scathing auditor's report into the Liberal government's substandard winter road maintenance contracts that risk the safety of Ontario motorists, four of those contracts have now failed. Since I asked earlier this month about the two contracts that had failed in Kenora and Sudbury, there are now two more: one in the Ottawa area, and now we hear whispers that they've walked away from the Niagara contract as well.

Will the minister now admit that the performance-based substandard winter road contracting they saddled us with in 2009 is a complete and utter failure, and restore the pre-2009 former Progressive Conservative system of winter maintenance that ensured motorist safety?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Kitchener—Conestoga for his question. I know that he referenced the auditor's report from earlier this year on the winter maintenance file. As every member of the House knows, including that MPP, we accepted all eight of the recommendations that flowed from her report.

He referenced the new contract that we have in the Kenora area. That is a contract that was actually awarded to a company from British Columbia that has a long-standing and strong track record of delivering winter maintenance—year-round maintenance in fact—in British Columbia.

We continue to work with all of our area maintenance contractors. I've had the chance to speak with all of them between last winter season and this winter season. People in this Legislature have heard me say that we've added more equipment, both in the north and the south; that we've added more opportunities for anti-icing liquid. We'll continue to work on this file. I said this just a few weeks ago: We expect that this winter season our contractors will perform according to their contractual obligations.

I look forward to the supplementary question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the minister: I'm glad he brought that additional equipment up in his answer. I'll remind him, in fact, of the auditor's finding that in one case the Liberal government incurred an annual cost of \$1.7 million for additional equipment—equipment that should have been there in the first place.

The minister has said himself that taxpayers have purchased over 100 new pieces of equipment for highways both in the north and the south—just like you heard. The minister has now walked away from four contracts in the north and in the south. Will the minister tell us how much of that equipment was bought to support these four failed contracts? How much?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, I'm not quite sure exactly what the member opposite is getting at with his supplementary question. He suggests on the one hand that we have a challenge in the winter maintenance program and he cites the auditor's report. Then he criticizes us—I think, if I understood it correctly—for moving forward aggressively to make sure that we address both northern communities and southern Ontario communities and bring more resources to bear.

Everybody in this chamber has heard me say this before: Our winter highway maintenance action plan, which is deployed and has been over the last number of months, has a number of initiatives including increasing the amount of equipment and material that we have on the highways right across the province, both in the north and in the south.

In addition, we have improved the Ontario 511 website. We have launched a Track My Plow program both in the Owen Sound and Simcoe areas, and we anticipate further expansion of that program. We are increasing the use of anti-icing liquids before winter storms, and we continue to work with all of our area maintenance contractors to make sure that they are fulfilling their contractual obligations to the people of Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Acting Premier. Each and every resident of long-term care deserves to live in safety and dignity. But, today, for too many seniors and vulnerable Ontarians, that's just not the case. We know that the government has failed to provide the behavioural supports that seniors with dementia need.

As New Democrats revealed earlier this month, there is an urgent and pressing need to tackle violence in long-term-care homes. When the rights of patients are violated, like the Thompsons, like the Cuthberts and like the Karrers, families are left in the dark.

Seniors, their families and front-line staff want to see action now. When will this Liberal government actually step up and implement the coroner's recommendations to improve care for all Ontarian long-term-care residents?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I thank the member opposite for her question. I also thank the coroner and his team for his report. There are many valuable recommendations in that report.

What I have committed to is that I have asked my ministry to look at the recommendations that the coroner has come forward with, in particular the recommendation around striking a committee or a task force to look at resident-on-resident abuse in long-term-care homes, in the context that we already have a province-wide dementia strategy. I've asked them to report back to me and let me know whether the existing dementia strategy is enough and will address the concerns raised by the coroner, or if we need to strike another task force. I look forward to their recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Again to the Acting Premier: The minister gives us the same old answer, but the families want to see action. The coroner's report on long-term care confirms what Ontarians have seen for years: There are simply not enough staff and not enough dedicated supports to ensure that every resident receives the care they need.

This Liberal government needs to take responsibility and fix the problems in long-term care, not by cutting services, but by investing in our public health care system. Will the Acting Premier commit today to tell Ontarians before the end of the year how this Liberal government will respond to each and every recommendation from the coroner's report to improve long-term care? And if not, why not?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, I appreciate the question.

Here are the facts. We have been investing in long-term care. We have increased the operating funding by almost \$2 billion since coming to office, and made a 2% increase in 2015-16 for resident care needs. We've opened 10,000 new long-term-care beds since taking office, and 30,000 beds are being redeveloped, on top of 13,000 which have already been redeveloped.

And we continue to invest in long-term-care homes. Some more examples: We have hired 900 new nurses and personal support workers. The first 30 of 75 new nurse practitioners are being brought online. Our government has made it mandatory for a home to notify the ministry immediately and contact the police when there's a suspected or witnessed incident of abuse or neglect of a resident.

We are committed to safety, and we look forward to working with all of our partners on this.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last Monday, the government unanimously passed the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, 2015. With this important piece of legislation now in place, we can now ensure that Ontario never returns to the days of using dirty coal-fired plants to generate electricity for the province.

This is a significant milestone for the province. I know that when Ontario phased out coal-fired generation, it was not only the single largest climate change initiative undertaken in North America, but also provided significant health benefits to Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could you please update the House on the benefits of eliminating coal from our electricity mix?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for the question.

We're proud that our government has passed the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, ensuring that Ontario never uses dirty coal generation again. Getting off coal was the single largest climate change initiative in North America, saving approximately \$4.4 billion a year in avoided health and environmental costs.

Ontario has made significant progress in reducing emissions from the energy sector through the phasing-out of coal-fired generation and shifting to non-emitting energy sources.

I would like to recognize that the Ontario Lung Association is here with us today, and they have been great advocates for the health benefits of Ontario's coal phase-out.

Getting off dirty coal allows for a better quality of life for people with asthma and less children suffering from air-quality-related illnesses.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Minister. The Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, 2015, clearly demonstrates

Ontario's leadership in the fight against climate change. My constituents will be pleased to hear about our government's foresight and leadership in reducing electricity system emissions in Ontario.

Climate change is an issue that is not going to disappear, and Ontario needs to remain a global leader going forward, because if nobody takes action, it will be impossible to avoid its catastrophic consequences.

With the elimination of coal, I understand that Ontario has become a leader in the generation of clean energy. Mr. Speaker, through you, to the minister: Could you please provide the House with some examples of Ontario's clean energy generation?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Our government is committed, and in fact remains committed, to investing in a clean, modern and reliable electricity system that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and provides cleaner air for today and into the future.

Ninety per cent of the power generated in Ontario during 2014 came from clean sources of energy, such as water, nuclear and non-hydro renewables, including solar, wind and biomass. Ontario has approximately 15,200 megawatts of wind, solar, bioenergy and hydroelectricity energy online.

Ontario has firmly established itself as a North American leader in the development, use and manufacturing of clean energy, and now has the fastest-growing clean tech sector in Canada, with firms that employ 65,000 people, creating \$8 billion of annual revenue. Today, Ontario has one of the cleanest and most modern electricity systems, creating a healthier population.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Deputy Premier. While I'm standing here in the Legislature, hundreds of people are standing out in the cold on Memorial Drive in North Bay. They are rallying today to protest the cuts of 350 front-line health care workers at the North Bay Regional Health Centre over the past three years, including 100 nurses who were fired.

Health care professionals and patients in my riding are concerned that the quality of care we're getting in Nipissing is in jeopardy, and it's creating turmoil in my community.

Recently, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions stated that North Bay's hospital needs an additional \$23 million in funding per year just to meet the Canadian average for a similar facility. My question is, will the Deputy Premier commit to restoring proper ongoing funding to the North Bay hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I want to start out by saying how proud I am of the health workers at that hospital, a relatively new hospital, built just a few days ago, because with our investments—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: A few years ago.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Did I say "a few days ago"? It was built a few years ago. We're not that quick, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say that, as a result of our funding increases, which for North Bay hospital are almost unprecedented—in fact, a \$100-million increase since 2003. That's an increase in funding to that hospital of 128%. As a result of those investments, we're seeing the quality of care go up. We're seeing wait times go down dramatically. In fact, nine out of 10 patients have seen wait times go down at that hospital, including, for example, cataract surgery, where the wait time has gone down by a dramatic 81%.

We know there's more work to do. We know this hospital and the administration are working closely with their LHIN to address any financial pressures, but we're working closely to make sure they continue to maintain those great accomplishments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Deputy Premier: Yes, it is a new hospital. How do you explain closing 60 beds in this brand new hospital? The hospital cuts come at the same time the government has locked out 200 workers at Ontario Northland for more than two weeks now. They are still hoping the Premier will act on their request to send the dispute to mediation or arbitration.

As I have stated many times in this Legislature, North Bay is a community in disarray. The situation at our hospital could get even worse. Without the immediate, one-time funding the hospital is seeking, another 50 jobs will be lost in North Bay. That would be devastating, especially as the holidays approach.

What message from the government do you have this morning for the hundreds of people standing on Memorial Drive in North Bay looking for an answer?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, my message would be, thank God that party isn't in government, after claiming that they would fire 100,000 people, many of them health workers.

What we're doing is we're working closely with the LHIN and with the hospital. I have to say that when the member opposite talks about closing beds, he should get his facts right, because in fact many of those beds, about 30 of them, are actually beds for mental health patients. It has been determined, through evidence, good science and outcomes, that those individuals, those vulnerable people, can actually be cared for better in the community.

Those residential, supportive opportunities actually have been and are being created in the community, so those beds and that support are actually being transferred out to where they can get better outcomes. I would hope the member opposite would support that kind of good evidence.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last week, families in Whitby and Oshawa

learned that yet another 21 workers will be laid off because of this government's cuts to health care.

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences says it is "increasingly challenging" to grapple with the Liberals' five-year freeze on hospital funding. The Liberals' decision to squeeze Ontario's hospitals means that less care for patients is taking place, with more worry for families, and lost paycheques and layoffs for dedicated workers.

Today, families in Whitby have a straightforward question and they deserve a straightforward answer: Will this Liberal government step up and stop the layoffs of 21 hospital workers in Whitby? Yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I'm proud of the hard work that those health care workers at Ontario Shores and in other facilities in that area of Whitby—the good work, the important and essential work that they do every day.

We're making changes to our health care system. I have to admit that we're transforming it. We're reforming it. We're making those bold decisions, including investing more money, \$250 million this year, next year and the year after; new money in home and community care, because we know that that's where people want to be. That's where we can care for them and provide the supports that they need to be cared for appropriately. The outcomes are better.

So I do admit that sometimes that requires shifting resources around if we want to invest more in mental health services in the community. Those funds—we do continue to increase the health care budget year after year. But we need to be prudent and we need to make responsible decisions that reflect science, evidence and good outcomes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I would suspect they would rather this government save their jobs than be proud of the work that they're now pulling out from underneath them.

The 21 layoffs at the hospital in Whitby are just the latest cuts to hospitals on a long, long list. The Liberals are forcing 84 jobs to be eliminated at hospitals in Belleville and Trenton. At noon today, families in North Bay, as has already been mentioned, will rally against the staggering 150 job cuts at their local hospital.

Every one of those workers in our hospitals plays an important role. They help provide care to patients in their most vulnerable moments, but that doesn't seem to be a priority for this Liberal government. When will the Liberals start listening to people in Whitby, Oshawa, North Bay, Toronto and right across the province and stop cutting the hospital supports, the hospital care that families rely on?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the opposition parties like to talk about the gross numbers. They like to talk about what is being proposed as part of a plan to reduce a number of jobs in a particular health facility. But often those jobs are empty to begin with; they're unfilled

positions or they're jobs that may be transferring to another part of the hospital, to another program, or maybe that a different type of health care professional, of which we have almost 30 different types—it may be that it's a job that's better held by a different kind of health care professional. You need to release the first job in order to create the second.

But we're also making those important investments that Ontarians are asking for. We are listening, and they're telling us that they want more home and community care. We are hiring people, nurses, health care workers and PSWs in the home and community care system. In fact, 24,000 more nurses in Ontario—all those nurses may not be in our hospitals, but they're in our communities.

1130

FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Last week, the Premier, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and many ministers met with First Nation leaders here in the Legislature. I was privileged to be present in one of those meetings. This annual gathering of aboriginal leaders is an important part of our government's efforts to ensure our relationship is a modern and mutually beneficial one. I'm proud to be part of a government that's committed to building and maintaining good relationships with First Nation partners.

Can the minister please tell us more about last week's meeting with First Nations leadership?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'd like to thank the member for Newmarket–Aurora for that question.

Earlier this year, our government signed a historical political accord with the Chiefs of Ontario. It provides a platform for First Nations and the province to work together on common priorities. Our government is committed to continuing to build positive relationships with First Nations, allowing us to work with them in a spirit of mutual respect and collaboration to improve the quality of life in First Nation communities.

Regular meetings with First Nation leadership are an important step toward achieving this progress. We will develop policies and initiatives that will lead to improved outcomes for First Nations.

Last week's meetings extended over three days here at the Legislature and at various off-site locations. They considered a whole host of topics of particular interest to First Nations and to this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Minister. I'm proud that our government is building such close ties between Ontario and First Nation leadership. I understand that having the chiefs at the Legislature provided an opportunity for them to meet with a record number of ministers—19 in total—to discuss a wide range of issues such as remote infrastructure, justice, poverty reduction and aboriginal education. These are important issues that profoundly impact First Nation communities and communities right across the province.

Can the minister explain some of the key issues discussed during last week's events?

Hon. David Zimmer: Meetings like this play an important part in maintaining the ongoing dialogue with First Nations. I'd like to thank my cabinet colleagues for taking the time to meet with First Nation leadership and to be a part of that dialogue.

One of the major themes discussed last week was the environment. With the Premier in Paris this week to discuss climate change, it is important to acknowledge that it could have a very real impact on many First Nation communities who depend on our ecosystem for food supply and economic opportunities.

Let me say this, Speaker: First Nations have an important role in the advice that they offer on climate change issues. That's why these dialogues are so important. Through co-operation and consultation with First Nations, we can work to find solutions to these problems that benefit Ontario, Canada and First Nations.

FAMILY DOCTORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It concerns this government's lack of consultation before cutting family doctors—and specifically the New Graduate Entry Program or NGEP. I've given the minister a copy of the letter he received from the chair of the department of family medicine at Stratford General Hospital and the president and CEO of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance. Here's what they had to say about the government's changes: "They will almost certainly spell the end of the involvement of family physicians at Stratford General Hospital."

So I have to ask the minister, can he see how seriously this would damage health care in communities like ours and how does he respond to the HPHA's concerns?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I really appreciate this question. I need to, first of all, stress that earlier this year, we made some changes to incent our family doctors to join family health teams in the high-needs parts of this province. I think all of us would support that laudable goal.

However, we also saw that there are family doctors who have done their training in a family health team environment and maybe don't have the opportunity, for a variety of reasons, to practise in a high-needs area. We created this program as an opportunity, but I want to stress that it's 100% voluntary. It doesn't force any physician to do anything. In fact, it's just specific to those areas which aren't high needs.

But it does point out a very important challenge that we face. Many, many, many months ago—and repeatedly—we shared our ideas with the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association, in great detail in terms of what we were thinking. Throughout those many, many months and repeated efforts, we did not get a single response, a single piece of advice—any advice—from the OMA whatsoever.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The HPHA is very clear: Policies designed for large urban centres very often have unintended consequences in small- and medium-sized communities. We're told that in our local hospitals family physicians may no longer be able to care for in-patients because of this government's changes. We're told this could add millions of dollars to our hospitals' budgets, budgets that haven't seen an increase for four years.

We need to know this minister is listening. When it comes to the NGEP, doctors and hospitals in small communities do not want it and did not ask for it. Will the minister fix this?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We created this program for new grads because we were listening. We were listening to medical students, new grads and family doctors.

I want to emphasize that we repeatedly and for many, many months, since late last spring, shared our proposal—it was simply a proposal at that stage—with the Ontario Medical Association. They obviously didn't share it with their membership. Actually, we created a program after significant stakeholder consultation but without any input or advice whatsoever from the OMA. Fortunately, the Ontario council of family practitioners were not going to be part of that silence. They came forward with a number of recommendations, including specific recommendations that I am confident are going to address the specific concerns from the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance.

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. A recently released report on food bank usage in Ontario shows that, since 2008, food bank usage has risen nearly 15%. The numbers speak for themselves: 90% of food bank users are rental or social housing tenants; 12% are senior citizens living in poverty; and 27% of single seniors are now living in poverty in Ontario.

Will the Acting Premier admit that her government is absolutely failing vulnerable and impoverished Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our work on poverty reduction is strong, thoughtful, and it is getting results. We acknowledge there is more to be done, but we have started along a path that is showing real results for people.

Take the example of a single mom with two little kids working full-time at a minimum wage job. When we took office, her income was less than \$20,000 a year. She was better off on social assistance than she was working full-time at a minimum wage job. Fast-forward to where we are today. That same individual has an income of close to \$30,000, a remarkable increase in the well-being of that family.

We are focused on a number of measures. We are measuring our progress, and we have recently announced in the new Poverty Reduction Strategy that we're focused on eliminating chronic homelessness in 10 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We recently learned that 48.6% of food banks in Ontario are reporting an increase in use; 34% of food bank users are children and a third of the people living in poverty are senior citizens. Those numbers are nothing to be proud of. This government has had 12 years to act on poverty. Vulnerable Ontarians are falling further and further behind.

Will this government finally make fighting poverty a priority—not in 10 more years—now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is exactly what is happening. I know that the member opposite has read that report from the Ontario Association of Food Banks, as have I and many others on this side. We were very, very pleased to see that this year there was a drop of about 4% in visits to food banks. That is not the only way to measure progress, but that is a very encouraging statistic.

As I say, we have taken several steps. We now have a willing federal partner, something we have not had for the past decade. We have a federal partner who is making a commitment through the Canada child benefit that will exceed our target of reducing child poverty by 25%. We always knew that we couldn't do it alone. We always knew that we needed support across governments. Finally, we have that support, and I'm excited about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time for question period has ended. There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to introduce Shannon Murree. Shannon has come to hear my statement today about the Shoebox campaign. Welcome, Shannon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I know that my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services earlier today, before question period, acknowledged that a group from her riding will be coming into the chamber. I gather that they'll be coming in shortly. They are a grade 5 class from a school in Richmond Hill, St. Marguerite d'Youville. I mention it specifically, as well as my colleague, because somebody who used to work for us on this side of the House, Maria Papadopoulos, is travelling with the group because her daughter, Zoe Vacilotto, is in that class. I just wanted to acknowledge them again. I'm gathering that they're going to be in the chamber very shortly. In fact, that could be them coming in right now.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: As members of this House know, for years we've been advocating for a bypass on High-

way 6 around the community of Morriston in the township of Puslinch.

I've been in Puslinch township the past two weekends to attend public events. People there understand the Highway 6 Morriston bypass is urgently needed. The traffic bottleneck in Morriston directly impacts the safety of local residents. However, it extends beyond that. Because Highway 6 is such a key economic corridor, connecting the 401 to the Hamilton-Niagara region, as well as to the US border, the traffic jams, which often stretch for kilometres, are costing our provincial economy millions of dollars each and every year. This was demonstrated in a University of Waterloo study conducted two years ago.

Mayor Dennis Lever and township council have pushed strongly for the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project. The county of Wellington, the city of Guelph and the city of Hamilton all support the Morriston bypass. So do the Guelph and Hamilton chambers of commerce, as well as Tim Hortons, Maple Leaf Foods, Nestlé Waters, Canada Bread and Cargill.

I appreciate the interest the Minister of Transportation has shown in our project. We're taking him at his word that he's pushing for it. And we know the Premier has also publicly acknowledged the importance of the Morriston bypass in this very House.

Based on my experience in the Legislature, I'm aware that the Ministry of Transportation will be preparing its pre-budget submissions right now. I urge the minister to continue to push hard. We've been waiting for this project for a generation. Let's work together to get it done.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yesterday I was part of a joyous and yet serious assembly out on the front lawns of Queen's Park. About 1,000 activists came together on very short notice to speak about climate change. I got to sing, which is always a pleasure, with the Raging Grannies. That was fun.

They wanted me to come here today with a message. I'm just going to quote from our friend from the Toronto Star, Thomas Walkom, who said, "The longer we postpone these actions ... the more likely it is that we will face mass flooding, drought, civil unrest and other crises resulting from extreme weather," not to mention other things.

He also went on to say, "Much has been made of Ontario's decision to join Quebec and California in a so-called cap-and-trade scheme to limit carbon emissions." But as his colleague Martin Regg Cohn pointed out, "Ontario has been unconscionably slow in attacking climate change and won't join the Quebec-California scheme until 2017."

We need action, Mr. Speaker, and we need action now. We have a federal government that is going to Paris without any clear cap on their emissions, without any willingness to have firm guidelines or legislation in place. The time for greenwashing is over. The time for green action is now.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Across Canada, November marks Lung Health Month. Lung disease affects one in five Canadians. Sadly, lung cancer kills more Canadians than breast, colon, ovarian and prostate cancers combined. In Ontario, 2.4 million people are living with asthma, COPD and lung cancer, and this number is expected to grow to 3.6 million in the next 30 years. With these alarming figures and significant associated health care costs, we must do more to combat this terrible disease.

I have first-hand knowledge of the toll it takes on patients and their families as my oldest son suffers from lung disease. Health care professionals are calling on our government to initiate a lung health strategy. To that end, I presented Bill 41 last November entitled the Lung Health Act, and I encourage all members in the House to support it.

One initiative that brings hope is the Ontario Lung Association's Breathing As One campaign. It calls for improved collaboration to move beyond traditional lung research and the battle against the disease. Lung health is important to all, and I know that all members join me in thanking the health care professionals and their providers for their work in supporting those living with lung disease.

Thank you also to the members who support the all-party lung health caucus, and to my fellow co-chairs, the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London and the member for Nickel Belt. As Ontario Lung Association President George Habib reminds us, "When you can't breathe, nothing else matters."

JANICE BYE

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to recognize the late Janice Bye. Ms. Bye, a native of Holstein, Ontario, was known in the Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound community as a great advocate for children. Over the two decades that Janice worked as a pediatric physiotherapist, she endeavoured to make a difference in the lives of thousands of young people. Many of them are society's most vulnerable children.

Ms. Bye worked as a caregiver with Closing the Gap Healthcare Group, serving all schools in the Bluewater District School Board and its almost 20,000 students. Her work involved developing physiotherapy programs for special needs children, ensuring they were accommodated with proper seating and mobility devices. She assisted children recovering from medical procedures and those who were dealing with a loss of mobility, strength and endurance due to illness or injury.

I'm told Ms. Bye was always brave, loving and energetic, embracing disability and diversity. Most people remember her for the overwhelming contribution of care, encouragement and compassion that she provided local children and their families.

After she died suddenly and tragically in a car crash last June, I heard from educational assistants, teachers and families whose children she supported through her

work. They said, "Janice was infallible in her work and devotion to special-needs children" and "truly gifted in her work and who will be deeply missed."

Christina Schnell McDonald, whose daughter Natalie was in Ms. Bye's care, personally reached out to me immediately to see if a special acknowledgement could be awarded to recognize Janice for her "above the call of duty" personal care and commitment. She said, "Janice was an amazing person and provided such wonderful care. We need people to know just how much of a difference she made in the life of Natalie and many, many others."

Ms. Bye was posthumously recognized for her amazing life's work and bestowed the Heroes in the Home award by the South West CCAC on October 20 in a ceremony at Stone Tree Golf and Fitness Club.

Ms. Bye will be remembered in the hearts of all she touched as a caring and dedicated children's physiotherapist. Most of all, she will be remembered for being the one who always went above and beyond her call of duty.

RENEWABILITY ENERGY INC.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to recognize a green manufacturing company in Waterloo region that I had the pleasure of visiting on November 20. RenewABILITY Energy Inc. is the global leader in drain water heat recovery technology with their patented Power-Pipe heat exchanger system. This year they're celebrating their 15th anniversary. This technology reduces energy consumption by using outgoing drain water to preheat incoming cold fresh water.

In Ontario, over 50,000 homes currently have this technology. The Power-Pipe is easily retrofitted into homes and easily installed in new buildings. In fact, it requires no maintenance, lasts up to 100 years and is about 10 times more cost-effective than solar water heating systems.

Energy code credits for this technology are now available in Ontario, many states, the UK and Europe. In fact, Manitoba has recently made drain water heat recovery mandatory in all new residential construction, a change that's worth considering.

However, this industry has been having problems in Ontario. Right now, drain water heat recovery has been excluded from the 2017 prescriptive compliance options for single-family and multi-family residential buildings. It's costing green manufacturing jobs in this province, something the government has suggested is a priority.

It is my hope that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will recognize and fix the problem. Drain water heat recovery technology should be included in any potential energy retrofit program that will help Ontarians effectively and affordably reduce their carbon emissions.

SHOEBOX PROJECT

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Last Saturday in the great riding of Barrie, a local restaurant called Big Chris BBQ hosted the fourth annual Shoebox Project.

The Shoebox Project is a charity that asks people to fill a shoebox with small luxury items for women at local shelters. Each shoebox contains items valued at \$50 or more that a woman would enjoy but not splurge on for herself in difficult times. Luxury items such as fancy socks, gift cards, lipsticks and a variety of toiletries are welcomed by these women. These articles brighten the holiday season and let the women know that they are special and not forgotten.

1310

Putting together a shoebox is easy, and this small gesture of kindness is very much appreciated. The Shoebox Project has helped such organizations as the Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie and the Elizabeth Fry Society of Simcoe County.

Although this event in Barrie is over, I encourage everyone in this House to fill a box and deliver it in your community by visiting www.shoeboxproject.com. Also, the women's caucus of this Legislature is collecting boxes to distribute to shelters and to Syrian refugees. Good news: You can still take part if you deliver filled shoeboxes to room 340 by noon on Monday December 7.

Thanks to Shannon Murree, the local coordinator for this Simcoe county project, and to all the volunteers and contributors involved in this project for the work that they do to help these women have their own special parcel on Christmas morning.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Last week the Premier came to Perth—Wellington to attend the Mitchell Rotary club's rural-urban night. I'm glad she was able to visit one of the communities that I have the privilege to represent.

The Premier spoke about the illusion of a rural-urban gap, but, unfortunately, it is not entirely an illusion. In fact, my first resolution as an MPP dealt with this issue: I called on the government to re-evaluate policies that negatively affect residents of rural and small-town Ontario. It's now four years later, and the government is nowhere close to bridging the rural-urban gap.

There are many examples: Our municipalities still bear the brunt of provincial funding cuts. The provincial government slashed the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. Three years ago, the government abruptly cancelled the Connecting Links program, even though it was working. They recently revived the program, but at a fraction of its previous funding. Now, it appears that the municipalities will have to compete for funds they need to maintain provincial infrastructure.

In Mitchell, the Premier joked about the municipality of West Perth applying 11 times for the same project under Connecting Links. The people I represent aren't laughing. If the Premier is aware of the need for a new bridge, why should the municipality have to apply 11 times and counting?

Whether it's health care policies, energy policies or infrastructure funding programs, this government has turned its back on rural Ontario. It's time they changed course.

BLESSED CARDINAL NEWMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: As part of our government's ongoing support of student achievement and well-being, I'm pleased to rise today and speak on an important funding announcement that took place in my riding earlier this month.

I was delighted to announce that Blessed Cardinal Newman, a local Catholic high school, has been approved for \$30 million for a new replacement facility. This project is part of Ontario's ambitious capital priority plan which includes the construction of new facilities and a strong commitment for significant improvements to existing schools. The new state-of-the-art complex will provide 1,110 local students with an engaging and modern educational environment.

Blessed Cardinal Newman school has been serving the community of Scarborough Southwest for over 40 years and has, deservedly, earned a strong reputation for excellence in academics, the arts and athletics. It offers Specialist High Skills Major programs, advanced placement courses, extended French and a gifted enrichment program. This funding will allow Blessed Cardinal Newman to continue serving the local community and will create immeasurable benefits for students and local residents.

Supporting education is one of the most effective ways we have to ensure a successful and prosperous future for everyone in Ontario. I'm proud that Ontario continues to emphasize the value of a world-class education system. I look forward to more announcements in the future as we continue to support and invest in students and their families.

SPORTS HALLS OF FAME

Mr. Chris Ballard: November 21 was national sports day in Canada. Sport is part of our nation's identity. It teaches us a healthy lifestyle and leadership; it builds bridges between people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

In Newmarket—Aurora, the community understands the importance of sport: It brings people together. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand here today to acknowledge both the Newmarket and Aurora sports halls of fame inductees for 2015. Both of these organizations are dedicated to recognizing sports excellence in the community.

The 2015 inductees for the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame include Alan Dean, who, despite losing his leg, is actively involved in the Aurora Youth Soccer Club, both as a competitor and a coach; Mark Heese, a three-time Olympian who won a bronze medal in beach volleyball in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta; Kenneth Sinclair, who founded and built the Timberlane Tennis and Country Club in 1987; and Lowell McClenny, who anchored the best cable TV sports show going, called Sports Beat Aurora, which filled the airwaves with local sports events unique to Aurora.

I'd also like to recognize the inductees to the Newmarket Sports Hall of Fame: Jimmy Brennan, the former captain of Toronto FC; Joe Murphy, a former first overall selection in the NHL who went on to win the Stanley Cup in 1990 with the Oilers; runner Andrew Coates; the 1909 Talagoo lacrosse team; and Margaret Davis and Sally Brice, who founded the Newmarket Figure Skating Club in the 1950s.

Congratulations to all.

VISITORS

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: They were not in the chamber when I did the introduction, and they were not in the chamber when the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, the Minister of Community and Social Services, introduced them earlier today before question period, but they are in the chamber now. The grade 5 students from St. Marguerite d'Youville are here today. I know this is now their third introduction today, but specifically Zoe Vacilotto and her mother, Maria Papadopoulos, who at one point worked here, and all of the other students, parents and teachers who are here from the school: Welcome to Ontario's Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's make it four: Welcome.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Standing order 63(a) provides that "the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday of November of each calendar year."

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain ministries and offices on Thursday, November 26, 2015, as required by the standing orders of this House and by order of the House dated Monday, September 14, 2015, pursuant to standing order 63(b) the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Office of Franco-phone Affairs are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Accordingly, the estimates 2015-16, of these ministries and offices are deemed to be passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale, abrogeant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale et modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the parliamentary calendar.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that notwithstanding standing order 6(a), when the House adjourns on Thursday, April 21, 2016, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, May 2, 2016; and

That the House shall continue to meet in the spring meeting period until Thursday, June 9, 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that, notwithstanding order 6(a), when the House adjourns on Thursday, April 21, 2015, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, May 2, 2016; and in the spring meeting period meet until Thursday, June 9, 2016. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1320

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2015; Tuesday, December 1, 2015; Monday, December 7, 2015; and Tuesday, December 8, 2015, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Monday, November 30—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LUNG HEALTH

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I rise today, the final day of Lung Month, to welcome members of the Ontario Lung Association to the Legislature, who are here to meet with MPPs at their annual lobby day at Queen’s Park.

I commend the Lung Association and all of their partners for their hard work in preventing lung disease and promoting better lung health. Today provides us with an excellent opportunity to connect and discuss our shared goal of realizing a healthier Ontario.

I would also like to thank them once again for all their support in helping us to pass the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2015, an important piece of legislation that we know will help to reduce lung disease for generations to come.

The passage of the act marked the next step forward in our government’s efforts to move even closer to a truly smoke-free Ontario. I’m proud to say that we have already made much progress on reducing smoking in Ontario. Between 2000 and 2014, Ontario’s smoking rate dropped from 24.5% to 17.4%, which equals approximately 408,000 fewer smokers in Ontario.

But we know that we need to continue to take active steps to protect young people from the health risks and impacts of smoking. The Making Healthier Choices Act does exactly that. It provides for an increase in the maximum fines for those who sell tobacco to youth, making Ontario’s maximum fines among the highest in Canada.

It bans the sale of flavoured tobacco products, which come in a wide variety of flavours that appeal to young people, and it takes steps to regulate the fast-growing market for e-cigarettes here in Ontario. There are still a lot of questions about whether e-cigarettes are less harmful than traditional cigarettes, and there still is not sufficient evidence to determine for certain one way or another. But we do know that e-cigarettes are appealing to young people. That is why our government has taken a precautionary approach in regulating e-cigarettes. We’re protecting our young people from the potential risks until we know more.

It also makes tobacco products less tempting by banning the sale of flavoured tobacco, including menthol, and permits the government to further limit exposure to second-hand smoke in public areas.

The Making Healthier Choices Act also bans the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19. It bans the sale of e-cigarettes in certain places, such as hospitals or pharmacies. It prohibits the use of e-cigarettes in certain places, such as enclosed workshops and enclosed public spaces. Taken together, these changes make it harder for youth to obtain e-cigarettes.

Our government has been working alongside partners like the Ontario Lung Association, who have been instrumental in helping us to advance our goal of making Ontario the lowest-smoking jurisdiction in Canada. For that, they have my sincere thanks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It’s now time for responses.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I too would like to welcome and thank the Ontario Lung Association for their hard work in our province and also working to promote lung health. It’s the end of Lung Month and there have been many events throughout Ontario promoting lung health and the importance of breathing. We know that more than 2.4 million people in Ontario, or one in five, have chronic lung disease, be it lung cancer, asthma or COPD.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths for both men and women. Lung cancer alone kills more than breast, ovarian, colon and prostate cancer combined, and the primary cause of lung cancer is smoking, although 16% of people with lung cancer never smoked a day in their lives. I think that’s quite important to highlight. You wouldn’t think that would be the matter, but it’s important to remove that stigma from people who are diagnosed with lung cancer; they have not necessarily smoked during their lifetime. It is estimated that a smoker’s risk for developing lung cancer can be lowered to almost normal just 10 years after they stop smoking.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to mention asthma, which is one of the most common chronic diseases that make life difficult for everyone to breathe. In fact, one in five children suffer from this disease, and it’s very important that we ensure, as legislators here, that we do provide safe environments for our children in the school system.

I want to congratulate and thank every member of this Legislature for this past May, when we passed Ryan’s Law, which provided safe schools for our students. It not only allowed them to carry inhalers on them at all times with their parents’ permission, but it also created an educational awareness program for all staff—teachers, janitors, bus drivers—and ensured that the principal has a document on file ensuring that anybody coming in to teach that child has specific information and reference to knowing that that child has asthma, and they know what to do in case of an emergency. So I really do want to thank each and every one of the MPPs here who supported my bill, Ryan’s Law, and got that into effect.

This fall, with the help of the Ontario Lung Association, they’ve been working hard to disseminate the infor-

mation and create the tools needed in our educational system in order to ensure this bill is a success. Again, thank you very much to the Lung Association for having done that.

I also do want to make mention of another bill that's been sitting in the wings, waiting to come forward through the Legislature, and that is a bill by Kathryn McGarry: Bill 41, the Lung Health Act. We as a party have been standing behind that act. We are in no way creating any barriers to bringing that through committee. We want to hear it come through committee so we can further enhance the lives of people with lung disease in our province. I'm sure the Lung Association is 100% behind it. We will take forward any great idea that this government has to offer and support it, and this is one of those ideas we would like to see come forward. We hope the member from Cambridge's bill is seen shortly so we can institute another lung-positive bill in this Legislature through working together, ensuring that we have consulted with one another and bringing out the best bill possible.

Mr. Speaker, I do have to point out this government at this time—I'm thankful for what they have done with regard to helping improve the lives of people with lung health, but I do have to make mention that this government has to take the time and do the proper consultations and stop making changes behind closed doors.

We saw a reference of that last week when the government made a regulation change allowing the vaping of medical marijuana without really dealing and concentrating and consulting with the various stakeholders. They realized their mistake. They realized they shouldn't be making decisions behind closed doors. They realized that they need to start consulting, and they pulled that regulation back. I hope they have learned their lesson and, going forward, as we bring forward the Lung Health Act down the road, that there's consultation with all stakeholders before we make the necessary changes so that we can have an Ontario that we are proud of, and an Ontario that breathes easier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is always a pleasure to welcome members of the Lung Association to Queen's Park. They are a breath of fresh air, if you would excuse the pun. They are always very interesting to listen to.

This morning, I had the pleasure to meet with Carole Madeley, who is a registered respiratory therapist. Her dad is a well-known businessman in my riding, so it was nice to connect with her. She works for the Lung Association. I also met with Sherry Zarins. Sherry is the director, health promotion and public education, also with the Lung Association. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

They came, they were prepared, and they were well-informed. They had five "asks," Speaker, and I will go through all five of them.

The first one is an ask that I think the provincial government, the Liberal government, should be quite open to: It would be to pass a bill by one of their members.

The bill is quite simple. It asks for a lung health working group to be established. But it is the goal of that working group that is most important. The group would be there to develop an Ontario lung health action plan respecting research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease—something that we do not have right now. And it would make sure that the group submits an annual report card with respect to the minister's performance on the different undertakings.

1330

We all know that if we want things to get better, we have to be ready to set goals, to do the work, and then measure ourselves against those goals. This is what their number one ask is, and this is what the private member's bill is all about. I can assure you that the NDP supports this bill, but it is up to the government to decide what bill is actually talked about in committee. Right now, this committee sits idle. It could do the work quite easily. I hope they will listen to the Lung Association and move ahead with that.

Their number two ask was to have additional certified respiratory educators, a bit based on the model of the diabetes network that we have in Ontario. If you ask any primary care providers—it doesn't matter if they're solo fee-for-service, if they work in community health centres, family health teams, a nurse-practitioner-led clinic, an aboriginal health access centre—they all have people with COPD, they all have people with asthma, and they all treat people, unfortunately, with lung cancer.

What the respiratory therapist could do is set up a program with those people to help them self-manage these diseases. The more you empower patients with chronic diseases, the better the outcome will be for that person, for their family and for the health care system. Every time a COPD patient gets into a problem and gets admitted through emergency, thousands of dollars are spent trying to get them better. It is a whole lot easier to educate them so they can take charge of their own health and make sure that they manage their disease, and this is what they would like to do. It is a small ask—it is in the millions of dollars—but the ratio is that for every \$2 that you invest, you get \$100 back, so 50 to 1. It's the kind of investment that everybody would dream of, if you could get those kind of returns.

The third ask is a pulmonary rehabilitation service. Once you know you have the disease, there is still secondary prevention that can be done so that you get as healthy as possible, you get your respiratory system as healthy as possible and you maintain an exercise routine within your capabilities. Everybody can progress. If you give them the right support, if you give them the right rehab program, they do get better, and then have the maintenance in place so that they keep this.

I see that time is running away.

Ensure that spirometry is done within primary health care settings. It's a very, very cheap little test that people could do and it tells you an awful lot about how your lung health is doing. As well, provide access to what are called valved holding chambers. You know those little puffers? We've all seen them. Ventolin is a very common

one that kids with asthma use. There's a little chamber so that you don't have to coordinate pushing and taking a breath at the same time. Make those more available. They're \$50 apiece; some families just can't afford them.

Well put together—thank you for coming to Queen's Park. It was a pleasure to talk to you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of October 5, 2015, for private members' public business such that Ms. Scott assumes ballot item number 15 and Mr. Pettapiece assumes ballot item number 56.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I fully support, will sign my name and send it to the desk with page Noam.

NEWBORN HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: Midwives held a press conference this morning. They also wanted to table over 1,400 names on a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Health Protection and Promotion Act ... calls for the mandatory administration of erythromycin ointment as a prophylactic agent into the eyes of all newborns and specifies that the Health Care Consent Act ... does not apply to the prevention or treatment of communicable diseases of the eyes of the newborn;

"Whereas research evidence shows that the administration of erythromycin is ineffective at preventing infection;

"Whereas the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Association of Ontario Midwives call for the rescinding of the mandatory ocular prophylaxis laws;

They ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, "That the Health Protection and Promotion Act be amended to remove the forced administration of ophthalmic ointment."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Ben to bring it to the Clerk.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Prasanna.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) Reverse the cuts to health care;

“(2) Return to the bargaining table with the OMA (Ontario Medical Association) to resume negotiations for a fair physician services agreement;

“(3) Work with all front-line health care provider groups to develop plans to create a sustainable health care system for the people of Ontario.”

It's signed by a number of constituents, and I agree with it as well.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that is signed by a number of physicians who live in my riding of London West. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

1340

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to the page Prasanna to take to the table.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm reading a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014,

which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and affix my signature to it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with health care, signed by people from South River, Huntsville and Gravenhurst. It reads:

“Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve.”

I sign this petition and hand it to Brooke.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition that came from the people of the northeast and Mrs. Bonnie Houle, from Hanmer, in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

“Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and ask Megan Faith to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners;

"Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to their positive experience;

"Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who use tips and gratuities to pad their margins;

"Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees' tips;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees."

I support it, will sign it and send it to the desk with Jack.

NEWBORN HEALTH

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to present this petition with over 1,400 names gathered by the Ontario Midwives. I'd like to give special credit to Liza van de Hoef, a Quinte midwife, for spearheading this effort.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Protection and Promotion Act ... calls for the mandatory administration of erythromycin ointment as a prophylactic agent into the eyes of all newborns and specifies that the Health Care Consent Act ... does not apply to the prevention or treatment of communicable diseases of the eyes of the newborn;

"Whereas research evidence shows that the administration of erythromycin is ineffective at preventing infection;

"Whereas the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Association of Ontario Midwives call for the rescinding of the mandatory ocular prophylaxis laws;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Health Protection and Promotion Act be amended to remove the forced administration of ophthalmic ointment."

I will sign this and send it to the table with page Aaran.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario called "Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization." It reads as follows:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I couldn't agree more with this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Lauren to take to the table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water." I especially thank dentist Dr. Lisa Bentley of Mississauga for having sent that and many, many others like it along.

It reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of

municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and send it down with page Ross.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I regret to inform the House that the time for petitions today has expired.

1350

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR

LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 26, 2015, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Sousa has moved second reading of Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I've received a request from the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes, pursuant to standing order 28(h).

Second reading vote deferred.

POLICE RECORD CHECKS

REFORM ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RÉFORME

DES VÉRIFICATIONS

DE DOSSIERS DE POLICE

Mr. Balkissoon, on behalf of Mr. Naqvi, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks / Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de dossiers de police.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak on the third reading debate of Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015.

At its core, this legislation is about two things. It's about protecting people's civil liberties and it's about keeping our communities safe. The Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, if passed, will create clear, consistent and comprehensive rules on how police record checks are requested, conducted and disclosed for the first time in our province's history.

I want to repeat that because that point is really important: This proposed legislation will be the first set of clear, comprehensive and consistent rules around the disclosure of police record checks.

These reforms will address and remove unnecessary barriers to employment, volunteering, education and other community opportunities while protecting community safety and vulnerable persons by ensuring that employers have all necessary information.

This legislation covers a lot of ground, but at its heart it does three things.

The first would standardize the three types of record checks that could be requested in Ontario. They are (1) a criminal record check; (2) a criminal record and judicial matters check; and (3) a vulnerable sector check.

The second is that it will ensure that individuals receive a copy of their record and have an opportunity to review it prior to its release. It will also give individuals the opportunity to request that a decision to disclose certain types of records be reconsidered.

Third, it will ensure that those who have a record check for non-criminal reasons, such as an interaction under the Mental Health Act, will no longer be disclosed.

This legislation is the result of a broad collaboration with our policing, civil liberty, business, non-profit and mental health partners, who provided valuable input to help us develop a fair and effective framework and many of whom came to speak in favour of the legislation during public hearings. These groups knew that reforms were needed.

I'm pleased that our government is taking leadership and bringing forward meaningful change with respect to police record checks. This legislation is based upon the 2014 Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and Law Enforcement and Records (Managers) Network—LEARN—guideline. The guideline was developed in consultation with and has been endorsed by key partners, including the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, the John Howard Society of Ontario and many others.

During public hearings and debate, we've heard about many Ontarians who have faced unnecessary barriers because of inappropriate disclosure of non-conviction and non-criminal information in their police record checks. Through reports from organizations, such as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society of Ontario, we've heard about people who learned, during routine record checks, that their records included non-criminal conduct they had with police.

In some cases, the record resulted from the individual experiencing a mental health crisis; in others, they were victims or simply witnesses to a crime. In many cases, individuals were denied employment, had their education placed in jeopardy, were denied access to their chosen vocations or lost out on other important opportunities. Minister Naqvi stressed that point in his presentation to the Legislature during second reading. He stated that this legislation, if passed, will respond to the clear concerns raised by a large number of key stakeholders, and that it will do so in a manner that reflects the recommendations and best advice that we received from these stakeholders.

These unnecessary barriers could not continue. In July 2014, the Premier gave clear direction to Minister Naqvi in his mandate letter to address the privacy issues surrounding police record checks and indicated that background checks must be conducted in a fair and consistent manner across the province. Moreover, for individual Ontarians, it would mean that the protection of their civil liberties and privacy by limiting the disclosure of certain non-conviction information and prohibiting the release of non-criminal information.

I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the members of the public and partner organizations who participated in the process of moving this bill forward through second reading and their thoughtful presentations at the standing committee, and my fellow committee members. I must also say a special word of thanks to my colleagues in the House for their constructive and helpful participation in the debate as the legislation has moved forward.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would begin to address systemic barriers to economic opportunities for individuals, such as education and employment, created by the inappropriate disclosure of non-conviction and non-criminal information in police record checks. It will also minimize the incidence of police record check information being released to a third party without the consent of the individual. It will standardize the way police record checks are conducted, resulting in faster screening decisions and fewer opportunities lost.

The proposed legislation has the strong support of a range of stakeholders, including the police sector, civil liberties groups, the private sector, the non-profit sector, labour groups, the justice sector and the health sector. Mr. Speaker, we've consulted widely. We have listened and we incorporated the input and advice of our multiple stakeholders into the proposed Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015. I am honoured to support its adoption in this House and I recommend to my colleagues that they also do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): Further debate.

1400

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity this afternoon to speak in third reading to Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks. I note that the bill has been to committee and that there were people who came before it.

We did have some amendments that were put forward that weren't adopted. In particular, I know that our member for Dufferin—Ms. Jones's riding—had put forward Bill 79, An Act respecting criminal record checks for volunteers, and there was an amendment to incorporate that private member's bill into this bill. Unfortunately, that wasn't accepted, although, from what I understand, it may be incorporated somehow in the regulations.

In my riding, probably the biggest issue I've had with regard to police record checks has been just the timeliness of it, particularly when someone is applying for a job and they need the record check in order to be able to get the job. Often, the police forces are inundated with them or they don't have the manpower to be able to deal with it. I'm not sure what the reason is, but it can take a fair length of time, and often that creates a real problem for the people who are either applying for a job or perhaps just applying to coach a hockey team or volunteer in some sector. So that's been the big issue that has been coming up.

Our critic, the member from Chatham—Kent—Essex, pointed out in his initial speech that the demand for record checks has gone up tremendously. In fact, he cited that in Toronto last year, there were 110,000 police record checks asked for. That's an increase of some 92% in the past five years. That's a huge increase, so I think the issue of having enough resources to be able to deal with it is significant and I hope the government does deal with it, because it can be a real problem.

The private member's bill put forward by my colleague Ms. Jones, Bill 79, was trying to deal with that situation and also with the cost for individuals who just want to volunteer in terms of getting a police record check. What her bill was going to allow was that if you got one police record check, then you could use it for five different organizations, essentially. From her private member's bill, I note that in the explanatory note it says, "When a police force releases a criminal record check for a volunteer, whether to an organization or to the volunteer, the police force is required to release a maximum of five additional originals of the check to the volunteer at no additional charge if the volunteer so requests."

I think that makes a lot of sense because often you have situations, it seems, where volunteers volunteer for many different organizations. I think we need to do things that are going to encourage volunteering, not put roadblocks in the way for people to volunteer. I think that's something that makes sense. I hope the government incorporates the spirit of that bill through regulations to make it easier for our volunteers.

Certainly, while we're on the topic of volunteers, I do want to highlight just how important they are in my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka. I see, I think, what we all see in the job of being MPP: the fantastic work done around our communities by volunteers. Often, they do have to apply if they want to coach a hockey team or be a trainer for a hockey team or—I'm thinking about all of the activities my kids were involved with—help out with

Scouts, or they want to volunteer for even something perhaps like the agricultural societies. They often will require a check.

This Bill 113 is about putting in a province-wide framework for police record checks, and it is something that our party supports and feels is necessary, because right now, different organizations do different things. Bill 113 would require province-wide standards and rules for police record checks.

It would create three different types for the release of records. The first one would be a criminal record check, which is criminal convictions and findings of guilt under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. So that's sort of the simplest form.

Number two would be criminal record and judicial matters checks, or a criminal record check plus outstanding charges, arrest warrants, certain judicial orders, absolute discharges, conditional discharges and other records, as authorized by the Criminal Records Act.

The third, and certainly the most in-depth, would be a vulnerable sector check. This is a criminal record check and judicial matters check, plus findings of not criminally responsible due to mental disorder, record suspensions or pardons related to sexually based offences, and non-conviction information related to the predation of a child or other vulnerable person—that is to say, charges that were withdrawn, dismissed or stayed, or that resulted in acquittal. Obviously, that's the most in-depth record check for those working in sectors where there are vulnerable persons involved.

This bill would create more standards. It also allows for more protection for the individual, because it really is a balance between individuals' rights and protecting society. I think it's moving in the right direction. Certainly, it's something that I think we can support, and hopefully it's going to make it better for our volunteers who are trying to do a good job around our ridings.

I'm going to wrap up shortly, but I did want to just mention some of the fantastic volunteers we do have around the riding. I get to see them at the annual awards for volunteers. I think of Peter Daleman up in Parry Sound. I bumped into him on the street a month or so ago. He was driving from helping Habitat for Humanity build a new house, on his way to the Georgian Nordic ski trails, where there had been a break-in; he was responding to it to look after that. These people do such a great job.

A place where a record check would be used, I'm sure, is in victim assistance programs—VCARS. I know that Fran Coleman up in Huntsville is a volunteer there, and a wonderful person to do that—so compassionate. That is a service that really helps in Parry Sound–Muskoka. I raised a question just a month or so ago about the fact that they've had a tremendous increase in their workload but their funding has not kept track with that. Or in the Girl Guides—I run into Mary Jane Campbell in Magnetawan quite often. She has been involved for years and years in Girl Guides, and that's another place, I'm sure, that would be requiring a medical check.

Of course, all MPPs these days seem to spend most of our time in parades on weekends. I know it was three Santa Claus parades for me on the weekend: Huntsville on Friday night, Gravenhurst on Saturday morning and Parry Sound on Saturday afternoon. They have so many volunteers. My good friend Peter Holsgrove is working hard these days on the Rotary float for the upcoming Bracebridge Rotary Santa Claus Parade that's going to be happening this Sunday.

My other good friend Don MacKay, who always has a Lions guide dog with him and has for about the past 10 years—we all see these service clubs and the great work that they do around the riding. I think the first year I was elected, in the little village of Magnetawan, the Lions Club had just finished building a brand new outdoor skating rink, with a roof over top of it and a warm room to keep the Zamboni so they'd be able to flood the ice. It was a Lions Club of no more than about 20 people that built the whole thing, and there were probably 500 people out at that event.

It's important that we protect our volunteers and we make it easy for them to do the great work that they are able to participate in. I think this bill, Bill 113, is an improvement. It sets standards. It also protects an individual where there's information that is not a criminal record but in the current system might get released and might affect their ability to volunteer or get a job. There will now be these three layers of protection.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 113, and I shall close.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to stand again in this Legislature and share my thoughts today for the third reading of Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015. This is a bill that is in response to many personal and very public cases of unfair use of police non-conviction records that have had devastating effects on the lives of individuals across the province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this is now—well, I guess this is my third opportunity to speak to this bill. I will tell you that I'm only among three of my caucus colleagues who ever had this chance, because it had been time-allocated. So I'm glad to be able to, again, but anyway, I'm always pleased for a full opportunity to debate.

1410

So what are we talking about? This bill was born out of public concern for the unfair disclosure of non-conviction records. Many people have been needlessly denied opportunities in their adult lives as an unfair result of police record checks that turned up a record of something that did not result in a conviction, and that information would end up in a police check. People who have sought housing, employment, volunteer opportunities or opportunities of self-improvement have actually been denied those opportunities because of a negative and unfair surprise on a police record check.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you know this, but we live in a society built on the presumption of innocence, and so

here we have the opportunity to address a challenge to that presumption, and when we find that the presumption of innocence is not—when we're missing that somewhere, it's great to be able to target it and address it. Whether we're talking about street checks or non-conviction records disclosure, we have to challenge the framework, and re-establish and reaffirm our commitment to justice and privacy and freedom to equitably participate in our communities.

A little bit of background: Police record checks are routinely used and required in the non-profit sector, so individuals who want to volunteer or who are looking for employment opportunities are routinely required to have police record checks done. Incidentally, these record checks can be quite expensive, but more on that later. These record checks are done through the Canadian Police Information Centre, or CPIC, database. If people want to volunteer, they need a record check. If people are applying for a job, they request a record check. If someone needs to finish a program for post-secondary education and they have to do a placement, they might need a record check.

When a record check is done, as it stands now, the release of information disclosed through the record checks is not limited to records of conviction. In fact, it may, and routinely does, include non-conviction records. Non-conviction records—I'll focus in on records of interactions or something that does not result in a conviction or even charges—are what we're talking about here. So when we look at what it means, it's all contact with police where a record is taken, including criminal matters before the courts that result in acquittal or where a conviction is to be expunged, or if someone is a witness to an event, or even when someone may be in mental health distress, resulting in police contact. But they are records of something that does not result in a conviction or a charge. These are examples of non-conviction records. When these non-conviction records are disclosed during a routine background check, it can have injurious consequences. That isn't right, and that is not fair.

Just over a year ago the Toronto Star, as we've talked about extensively in this House, ran a series of articles called Presumed Guilty. It focused on individuals whose lives had been upset or unfairly affected by non-conviction records coming out in background checks. In May 2014, the Star reported that, "Hundreds of thousands of people are listed in Canada's national criminal records despite never having been convicted of a crime....

"More than 420,000 people were listed in the RCMP's Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database as having no conviction in 2005....

"Many of them are listed in the database for mental health issues.

"For example, nearly 2,500 with no conviction registered had a notation for 'attempt suicide.' Another 2,200 had a notation for 'mental instability' with no conviction."

Imagine people's surprise when their travel plans or background checks yielded non-conviction records that

persecuted them for suffering mental health challenges or for records of interactions with police that didn't result in charges or convictions—surprise. During second reading, I shared some of the personal stories of individuals who were featured in these Toronto Star pieces. I'm not going to go through them all again today, but I am going to remind us of some of the details so that we remember what the whole point of this piece of legislation was: that we remember that there are individuals who have been negatively affected by this. We want to ensure that this piece of legislation actually addresses those problems.

One example, from May 24, 2015, is a woman named Anne. Anne had fled to a women's shelter because of domestic abuse. Her husband at the time was arrested and charged with assault and threatening death. He filed a complaint against her for allegedly threatening him. At the time, she was told not to worry about it. However, years later, when she applied to be a volunteer at a women's shelter, she found out that she had a police record indicating that she was suspected of uttering threats.

As she said, "Anybody can pick up the phone, dial 911, file a complaint against you and if it goes in the database, you're stuck with it," she says. "When I discovered that I had this label for who knows how long, I just couldn't get my head around it. It boggles my mind. Who came up with this?"

She was also encouraged to just explain to future employers the circumstances and hope that they believed her. This is one example. This is why we've been debating this, I would argue, not long enough, but again, this is a specific example.

Another one: John tried to file a complaint to police about an issue in his life. He was told that he actually had a record himself of violence dating back to 2002. He had no idea what they were talking about. Upon closer inspection, he found out that it was an incident where someone had claimed he had pushed him in an argument. The police had showed up; he explained the situation. There was no arrest; there were no charges. Ten years later, he finds out that it's listed on police records, suggesting he was charged and convicted.

Another story—and this is one that is receiving wider attention. I'll come back to how this came up in committee and unfortunately hasn't been resolved.

Andrew is among thousands of Canadians who names are captured in these databases. Those databases are accessible to US border authorities. When Andrew was trying to travel for business, he was asked if he had ever been convicted of possessing narcotics. He had not, but when he was in high school there was an interaction with police, who charged them all with smoking something that they shouldn't. That narcotics charge was dismissed in court. However, the record was never removed from police computers. He wasn't able to go on his business trip.

I think people are familiar as well—one of the earlier stories in that series was Ellen, who was prevented from going on a March of Dimes cruise because a US border

agent said she was hospitalized for mental health issues back in 2012.

People have no idea what a police record might include. Records are very common, and they are disclosed without discretion. So there are very real concerns about the information kept in these records serving as a deterrent to seeking police help or involvement. If community members knew that by even interacting with the police there would be a resulting record, and that could potentially mean they couldn't get a job, volunteer or pursue a goal, it might make them stop and think twice about interacting in the first place.

Imagine a situation of crisis or distress. When an individual is in distress or in danger, we as a society would hope that they would reach out to the proper authorities or emergency services if needed. However, if someone knows that there are going to be repercussions, are they going to dial 911? If someone is wanting to support a loved one or a family member—wait, loved ones can be family members, can't they?—and to reach out and call the authorities if that person is in danger or in crisis, that individual shouldn't stop and go, "Hold on, what if they one day want to volunteer?", or, "What if one day they want to do a placement?" We should have a society where people run to help, not away from it.

Certainly, people who find themselves in medical distress or facing mental health challenges should not be captured under police record checks.

1420

Sometimes people need help. Sometimes they find themselves connecting with police when they are in distress or when they're suffering a mental health or emotional crisis. As I've said, any record of this interaction should not be accessible by prospective employers or anyone else—certainly not by US border guards. In fact, I would say non-conviction records are none of anyone's business—with those very specific exceptions that we discussed in committee, the most extreme cases connected to child welfare. You know what? I'm going to come back to that health records being accessed by US border officials.

Here's another example: Nadia from this Toronto Star piece was at the Detroit border and was stopped to go in for questioning. She realized that it was from an incident eight years prior from a 911 call during a troubled time in her life. As she said, "I eventually found out I was flagged because of what they called contact with police. I had no idea what they were talking about. Then I figured out they were looking at my 911 call. I was humiliated and stunned that some American border guard could access my personal health information. It's obscene."

I'm sure there are a number of people in this Legislature, and people across the province, who are, one day, going to consider crossing a border, who might travel for business or travel with family, and for them to be faced with that kind of personal privacy violation and surprise isn't something that we should allow to happen.

When it comes to mental health, we must support Ontarians, not vilify or persecute them. We don't accept

a system of persecution without prosecution, but this piece we find is exactly that. As I said, we want a system where Ontarians can connect with police, as needed, and they won't regret it for the rest of their lives.

This issue doesn't only affect those seeking employment or volunteer opportunities. Students who are hoping to graduate from post-secondary education can find themselves unable to graduate because they are barred from completing a placement because of a non-conviction report. Schools might have a privacy policy that prevents a school from investigating or delving into specifics when it comes to these disclosures, so there's never any room to manoeuvre, and these records preclude students from participating in some placements, which means, then, that they wouldn't be able to complete their program. They may have invested years, they may have invested time—well, obviously, time and years—but also money in their education to get almost to the finish line, and be told that they can't complete it due to a non-conviction record. Obviously, it's something that we're pleased is being addressed by this piece of legislation.

Both the John Howard Society of Ontario and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association have written reports on non-conviction records. They, among others, were at committee to come and share their thoughts, their concerns and their suggestions. They call for tighter control and for information to be withheld except in cases of significant threat to public safety. According to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, one in three Canadians are thought to have some form of non-conviction record just hanging out in police computers. So we're glad this legislation will address some of their concerns.

Some groups that have organized against police non-conviction records disclosure include those who have been working for police record checks reform through the Police Records Check Coalition. Groups including the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario; the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario; the Canadian Civil Liberties Association; the John Howard Society of Ontario and the Ontario Association of Patient Councils have positioned against the disclosure of non-conviction police records.

Many of these groups presented during committee and shared their concerns with us and with the government. They shared their concerns, their suggestions and their ideas. I want to say that I really value committee work. It is when we get to hear from Ontarians. It's when we get to learn from those who are living and working in the province who have to live and work under legislation that may or may not make their lives better or easier.

Here, we have an important bill—a really, really important bill. I want to talk a little bit about what happened or what didn't happen in committee. As I mentioned earlier, Ontarians' personal and health information can surprise them at the airport. Their personal and health information can be used against them by American border authorities or foreign authorities because they have access to the CPIC and CIPC databases.

The NDP moved an amendment to protect this information and proposed that, and I'll use the exact language

here, “a police record check provider shall not, in response to a police record check request, disclose any information about an individual that is contained in a special interest police entry in a Canadian Police Information Centre database or another police database maintained by a police service in Canada, to a government in Canada or in a foreign country, or to any agencies of that government, except as may be relevant to an active police investigation.” That was our proposed amendment, and this would have remedied the situation where personal health information is available cross-jurisdictionally. This would have strengthened the bill.

This issue of travel and personal information coming out at the border is a very public one; it was very well covered by media. Yet this government not only didn't support the amendment, but they didn't even seem to support it in spirit.

My colleague the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton also proposed an amendment to the exceptional disclosure process. He proposed that a judge, a fair and impartial third party, conduct a review of the provider's determination and decide whether all of the criteria have been satisfied. Essentially, a judge would weigh evidence and make the determination of whether or not criteria are satisfied, rather than have it be left to the discretion of those who hold the non-conviction records. The government again said no.

Again and again we heard during committee—we also read it in the submissions—that the cost of obtaining a police record check can keep some of our community members from volunteering or from applying for employment. We heard ideas around costs of checks and the number of copies that could be given to someone requesting them. In fact, I will refer here to the summary of recommendations put together by legislative research on Bill 113.

As they have said, some organizations require annual screenings. Many people have limited incomes, and these checks can represent a financial burden as well as an economic barrier to full participation. The recommendation from stakeholders was that Bill 113 should address the subject of costs.

Also, it was suggested that there be a set standard fee, or a fee waiver in cases made by low-income individuals, students, seniors and volunteers.

There were questions about the length of validity of these record checks.

There were concerns that Bill 113 should not have the effect of driving up the cost of police record checks, that that be ensured. One idea was that eligible non-profit organizations should have a separate program to cover the costs of these police record checks.

There were a number of suggestions, a number of recommendations that we certainly hope the government will consider when it comes to regulations. We heard in submissions that costs are prohibitive. However, the government rejected opposition amendments to address this, opting to handle it in regulations, as I said. I don't really know what I think about this “in regulations” part,

Speaker, because in this case, why put off until tomorrow what we could have meaningfully addressed today?

Just to recap, the NDP wanted to protect health records from outside authorities, and the government? Nope. The opposition called for multiple checks for the price of one, and the government said no.

The whole impetus for this act really did seem to come from the public. The Star series of articles drew the public's attention to this matter, which needs to be addressed, but for crying out loud, we're not addressing it. Mental health records should not be police records. Personal and private health information should not keep someone from going to Disneyland or from travelling across the border for work or for any reason.

That was the public understanding of the reason for this bill. There are many other parts, as we have talked about, but that was one publicly understood reason for this bill, and it isn't being addressed.

1430

This bill was supposed to protect an individual's privacy and rights. It was supposed to restrict sharing of personal and private information. It does, in most instances, but it doesn't go far enough. It was supposed to protect people, but it isn't protecting their privacy and information the way it could and the way it should.

Another opposition amendment sought to remove a part of the original legislation that would require that there not be any prosecution under this act without the minister's consent. The government rejected that, too. They're essentially preventing people from seeking a remedy. If an individual's rights are violated and there is potential reason to prosecute under this act, the government says, “Well, maybe, but only with the minister's consent.” What? This is a bill addressing civil liberties and privacy, so we need to do it right. We need to protect people, with or without the minister's consent.

Mr. Speaker, we support this bill. As I said earlier, we need to challenge the framework and re-establish and reaffirm our commitment to justice, privacy and freedom, so that everyone can participate fully and fairly in our communities and in their own futures. We believe in safe communities where people participate freely. Sometimes they make mistakes; sometimes they're in the wrong place at the wrong time. People should be able to participate freely, as we said. We want communities to communicate with police, and we would hope that, when they do, those records can't come back to haunt them.

This is a solid piece of legislation; it's very important. But, as I've pointed out, there were opportunities in committee to strengthen it, to really get to the heart of the whole reason that we're bringing this forward: protecting civil liberties and privacy. There were some missed opportunities. Putting things off until regulation was, again, a missed opportunity. We had suggestions on the table that we could have adopted during the committee process.

As always, I challenge the government to really put its money where its mouth is: If you want to have a strong bill, make it strong. As I said, I was one of three people

in my caucus to speak to this bill, because of time allocation. While I'm glad to have had that opportunity, rushing a process, especially when we're talking about fundamental civil liberties—privacy, sensitive mental health information—that's not a process to rush. In committee, when we hear from people and disregard some of their concerns, again, that's not a process we want to embrace. Rather than have halfway measures, let's make them the best they could have been to strengthen this bill.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak again to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I also welcome the opportunity to join this debate on Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act. As we know, the bill strikes out terms like “criminal reference check” and “record check” and substitutes the term “police record check.” So, we've changed the language and, going forward, technically or linguistically, we don't call for a “criminal background check” for somebody who wants to work in a bank. However, if this law passes, as I understand it, that still remains the case. The words are changed; that's about it.

The act, as we know, authorizes police forces to conduct three kinds of police record checks: criminal record checks—even though we don't call them that now—criminal record and judicial matters checks, and vulnerable sector checks.

As we discuss this proposed legislation, I do stress that the PC caucus supports the rights of all Ontarians to be treated fairly and to be treated equally. Everyone is to be treated equally before the law in our society, although there is an exception I have witnessed over a number of years, and that would be Caledonia.

It is also important for people to understand that this bill is not about carding. Our daily paper last month had a good article on the issue of carding. Keith Leslie, actually, of The Canadian Press explained that the new regulation would ban the random stopping of citizens by police and require officers to provide a written record of any exchanges. Reading this article on the weekend, it says that Community Safety Minister Naqvi indicated that the draft regulations would establish clear and consistent rules to protect civil liberties during voluntary interactions between police and the public. He indicated in this article that the government heard from many people of colour—that's how it was described in the newspaper article—and aboriginal men and women who said that the Human Rights Code was being ignored by police who stopped them for no apparent reason. He says that police will not be allowed to stop people based on how they look or which neighbourhood they live in. Again, this was not the case over a number of years in the Caledonia Six Nations incident.

I'm quite heartened by Bill 113. One of the main objectives is to establish standards right across Ontario and establish province-wide rules when it comes to police record checks. As I have indicated, Speaker, we do support the right for all Ontarians to be treated fairly and

equitably. We support this legislation because it brings consistency to police record checks. It's based on recommendations of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, amongst other groups.

However, as I indicated, over nine years—and the media reported on this consistently—we had an issue of two-tiered justice. This was in Caledonia. In fact, the president of the OPP Association, Karl Walsh, was the one who termed that phrase, “two-tier justice,” during a media interview in June 2006. His concern was that so many officers and citizens were being injured unnecessarily in Caledonia. There was a two-tier system, and in spite of what we do here, it was not a fair and equitable administration of the law.

So here we had the president of the union, representing something like 7,500 OPP officers, and he indicated in the Caledonia stand-off that there was one law for aboriginal people and another for everyone else in the province. As he said, “Our concern is basically that there is a two-tier justice system.” This was a reference in the Toronto Sun, June 16, 2006. I looked this up in a book written by Gary McHale. Actually, I'll give you the title of the book. It's Victory in the No-Go Zone: Winning the Fight Against Two-Tier Policing. I sincerely believe that this legislation, Bill 113, as with that carding regulation, is a step in the right direction to try and eliminate this kind of approach—and I'm colour-blind when it comes to race—that makes a distinction with respect to race. Legislation has no business being involved in that, and the enforcement of legislation has no business being involved in racial differences.

I'd like to quote Walsh again. This is in a book by Christie Blatchford entitled Helpless. “I still don't understand why we took different approaches to law enforcement in Caledonia. I don't think I'll ever understand it. I've never been given an adequate explanation as to why that occurred.” He goes on to say, “I can't forgive them for a lot of the approaches they took to this and I think numerous officers got unnecessarily injured, I think everybody that was involved in this suffered injuries that could have been [avoided] had they just stuck to their training, stuck to their policies and stuck to the law.”

Here we are, Speaker, debating, creating a new law, an amended law, and I sincerely hope that this law is followed through as to its original intent.

1440

Walsh concluded by saying, “You know, the law doesn't discern colour of skin or ethnic background, and it's not supposed to. Justice is supposed to be blind.” I think we all agree with this. However, under certain circumstances that has not been the case, and Caledonia has shown that repeatedly.

There's reference as well to our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a reference that it's merely words on a piece of paper and can be destroyed at will by the very people sworn to uphold the law. We have a system—and I'm referring to what Walsh is talking about—where our

leaders act in way that is beneficial to society, but in Caledonia—and again, this comes from Christie Blatchford's book—police officers became pawns.

I am pro-OPP in this case. I witnessed it time and time again. In my view, the OPP became pawns of the higher-ups, be they politicians or perhaps senior administration in the OPP.

I'll wrap up by quoting Christie Blatchford: "Caledonia is all about the absolute failure of the system to protect average people—a failure that is rooted in a race-based approach to policing and public policy." I remain confident that this legislation dealing with police record checks will ensure that this cannot be misused.

As many, I've had challenges in our constituency office. A gentleman came in just a week or two ago. He was actually quite upset. He wanted to go to Simcoe for his record check. He's from Haldimand county. The reason he needed a record check: What he does right now is he plays the role of Santa Claus. He knows he's got to be fingerprinted; it would make life for him a lot easier just to go to Simcoe. It's a little closer. He was turned down. He has to go to Cayuga, wait a few days, then go back to Simcoe again.

I don't know whether children are watching this afternoon, but I can tell you that Santa Claus was in my office, and by his use of language, I could tell that he was very, very angry.

It suggests to me as well that with this legislation, we've got to get the regulations straight. We have to ensure that the system can be as streamlined as possible to make sure we don't have these kinds of overly bureaucratic, cumbersome roles. I'm referring to rural areas, where, instead of going to the nearest OPP detachment—that may be in the county you don't live in, but it's a lot closer—you have to go to a detachment in your particular county. You may not be working in that county. Again, anything that can be done—and I know this goes beyond the legislation—to make sure that this legislation is carried through as simply and easily as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House to talk about various issues and, today, to talk about Bill 113 in this time-allocated debate, An Act respecting police record checks.

We've heard from many speakers here that people are surprised when they need a record check and something comes up that they had long ago forgotten—in many cases, something that came up in their teenage years that they had never been charged with, but it was on the books somewhere. I think this bill recognizes that.

A lot of other members have brought up—and some of those I'm going to bring up as well—other issues with police record checks; for instance, the difficulty in rural areas of actually getting a police records check. We have volunteers who want to help, and in my riding and in many northern ridings and in many other rural ridings, it's not a case of a two-minute drive. It takes a lot of work to get a police record check.

One of my neighbours came over recently. I'm going to use his name in the Legislature—I'll send him to Hansard: Mr. Larry Reeves. He is a neighbour of mine, and he teaches a trapping course to people who want to learn how to trap. It's a noble profession in northern Ontario and a needed profession, and he needs a police record check to do a trapping course. He doesn't have a problem with that, but he needs fingerprints and he has to have new fingerprints each time. His question—maybe our Sergeant-at-Arms can answer this question; he's got a police history. Sorry, Dennis.

His question was: Do the fingerprints change?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Let's hope not.

Mr. John Vanthof: Good response, Minister of Transportation. Let's hope not.

Why does he have to submit new fingerprints each time, at added cost and much more complication? That's his question. You have a volunteer who wants to teach young people or adults or whoever wants to learn—in most cases, young people—how to do something that's an age-old tradition, and to do it humanely and respectfully, and he's asked for new fingerprints every three years. Really, does that make any sense at all?

To put this in perspective, could you imagine how all our TV shows—CSI—would do if, at the end, "Sorry, the fingerprints are outdated. So we're done"? It just doesn't work that way. Why do you put a volunteer through that extra grief? We can chuckle about it here, but for those people it is a big issue, and it's a big issue in rural Ontario because we all know that we have a dedicated group of volunteers—I'm sure every community has—but the harder you make it to volunteer, eventually those people get fed up, and I don't blame them.

I think it's a good opportunity, now that we're talking about police record checks in this House, to bring this issue up. One of the great things about being a representative of my constituency is that when the time presents itself, you bring these issues up. Someone out there in the bureaucracy should explain to the members of this House why you need new fingerprints every three years when you're applying to be a volunteer. Does that make any sense?

In my case, where I had a bit of an alteration to my hand, I could see that. But for most people, their fingerprints don't change. Right away, we should be able to somehow change that for Larry and thousands of people like him who want to help people. There is a purpose why volunteers should have a police record check. There is a purpose for that. It's a screening to make sure there is nothing that could taint their volunteerism in any way—no problem with that. But when you make rules to try to do things that are just nonsensical, we have got to stop that.

Now that I have put Larry's case on the record—hopefully we can move forward with cases like his—I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to have spoken, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is my pleasure to rise today and to speak to third reading of Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, and deliver some remarks on behalf of my PC caucus, especially as the critic for community safety and correctional services. I'd like to start by shining a light on our great province of Ontario, which was, once upon a time, a role model deserving of imitation.

At one time we were an economic powerhouse in this great country. We were once a province envied by others. We possessed a thriving economy, a strong middle class and ample opportunities for growth. Today, we lead North America with the highest energy rates—oh, I shouldn't be smiling on that—a steep unemployment rate and an insurmountable debt resulting from government mismanagement and scandal.

1450

Although I stand alongside everyone here today in support of Bill 113, there are many ways in which this government of the day chooses to do things which are, to put it mildly, irregular. Some may call it innovative, but I think the correct description would be to call it disrespectful to true democratic government policy and procedure. But for now, let's talk about the impacts of this bill, both positive and otherwise.

Bill 113 establishes Ontario as a leader. With this legislation, surprisingly, we will be the first province to establish a standardized framework for all organizations to follow when it comes to police record checks. As a leader, we have the opportunity to do it first, but what is more important is that we do it right.

I'm very disappointed that my fellow MPP Sylvia Jones's very important private member's bill, Bill 79, was defeated. Although the sitting government promised a place in the established framework for her proposal, I don't think this is sufficient. What I do think is that it will end up costing valuable volunteers in this great province who lend their valuable time to more than one worthy organization and cause. Within my constituency alone, the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, I've had numerous complaints about the cost, the term of validity and, even more so, about the inconsistencies in price and information received.

In this current economic atmosphere that Ontario is in, it's seldom that an individual, when seeking employment or a volunteer position, applies for only one position. While it is definitely in their best interest to spread their "eggs" among several baskets, it can be very costly to do so within the existing framework. An average standard police record check costs, usually, between \$15 and \$25, and more and more employers are requiring police record checks as a condition of employment. This process becomes very costly for someone who is already unemployed, underemployed or seeking voluntary work. In committee, the government stated that it was going to be a logistical nightmare to provide additional copies of a police record check document. That was my authoritative voice on behalf of the government.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It sounded like it.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Very good. Thank you very much, Minister of Transportation. You're now on record, so you can leave now.

I'd like to remind the government that it is not the Ministry of Community Safety that is issuing the paperwork, but rather, it is the issuer of a police record check that will be, in fact, providing the additional copies, but only if it is requested when the request for the record check is made.

Where is this nightmare for the government? The police services issuing the records check can just as easily process five copies of the document as they can one. I'm not sure whether the government feels it should not be in the bill itself, but rather, in the regulations. The decision of the government to defeat the motion in committee further delays the implementation of an aspect of the bill that will help our busiest volunteers and Ontarians who are either trying to find employment or who seek better employment to positively impact their lives.

Clearly, it is evident that the state of employment in Ontario is—to put it lightly—depressed. Undoubtedly, Bill 113 will remove some of the unnecessary barriers that people face when securing a job. I do look forward to seeing how the government will implement MPP Jones's bill into the current regulations with the hopes of saving thousands of Ontarians precious time and—might I add—money, as well.

Moreover, the beneficial amendment to exempt the third parties that conduct record checks was also defeated. I believe that the government failed to take into consideration the lapse in time it takes for an individual requesting a police clearance and the amount of time it takes for the actual employer to receive it. The standard amount of time is upwards of four weeks. Third-party organizations have the ability to complete a record check in one day, saving time and grief for both those applying for the job and those screening candidates for a position. Although I'm not surprised the motion was defeated, as it seems to have become a characteristic of this government to micromanage and thus prolong regular, routine matters, evidently the cost of these defeats will undoubtedly come to the forefront as organizations and businesses will be adversely affected by this profound barrier. It would appear that the government is removing employment barriers for some, all the while making it harder for others.

Unlike the government, the Ontario PC Party took the time during the committee process to meet with the National Association of Professional Background Screeners. This is an organization, Speaker, that represents companies that process record checks for some of Canada's top blue-chip corporations and financial institutions; and I might add that some of these companies do work for the Ontario government.

Seeing as the government chose to dismiss their comments in public hearings, I'd like to remind the government of just who the National Association of Professional Background Screeners—or, in short,

NAPBS—is. NAPBS is a voluntary professional association comprised of background screening companies that represent the interests of its members internationally. They have chapters in Asia-Pacific, Canada, Europe and the United States, more than 800 members, and have been in existence for over 12 years. NAPBS's objective is to be the collective voice for the background screening industry. Here in Canada, specifically, they have 21 members who account for delivery of over 90% of the screening that is done in the country. And as I had mentioned earlier, the screening is completed in one day, and most often within just simply a matter of hours.

The types of clients they serve truly span all industries and sectors, serving both for-profit and not-for-profit. Some of their major clients include: retail, financial services, telecommunications, government at all levels, temporary staffing and, of course, logistics. There are literally thousands of clients across Canada and internationally, including names such as: Bell, Loblaw's, WestJet, all banks and financial institutions, as well as Walmart and Telus, just to name a few.

NAPBS screens client applicants to ensure their own compliance with governing regulations and to also ensure the safety of their employees, their clients or participants, their assets and their brand integrity. Clients rely on efficiency, expertise and commitment to accuracy of NAPBS, knowing that the checks are conducted by Canadian police services. There is always a need to balance human rights and privacy legislation, an area where NAPBS members provide leading best practices and thoughtful leadership to clients.

Now, there's no question, Speaker, that the volume of criminal record checks has been steadily increasing, whether driven by internal organizational forces, safety concerns or regulatory reasons. The industry anticipates the volume of criminal checks conducted to steadily and continuously increase moving forward.

Due to changes that occurred in the process, the front counters of police departments have been completely inundated with requests for criminal record checks, and many have clearly indicated that this is not a core business they wish to be in. Checks can and do consume significant police resources that are not fully—and often not at all—compensated via the cost of the check. The unintended consequence is unfortunate and inconsistent delays in the delivery of results.

The National Association of Professional Background Screeners is, in fact, Mr. Speaker, a very viable and common alternative for many to process criminal record checks due to the streamlined, efficient, consistent and secure approach that they have. They turn record checks around within hours and their record-keeping standards often exceed the security expectations of others dealing with such sensitive personal information.

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It has been noted that the National Association of Professional Background Screeners does not complete any vulnerable sector check requests.

Each screening provider has documented and approved relationships with police forces across Canada,

including a substantial number in Ontario. Each of these business arrangements is, in fact, governed by RCMP policy and executed memorandums of understanding, also known as MOUs, which are in place between the member company, the police service suppliers and the RCMP.

NAPBS has an ongoing productive working relationship with the RCMP, and there is a very healthy respect for their roles and impact on the industry. While they do not speak to all criminal record checks done in Canada, when they are processed through NAPBS members who are bound by a code of conduct and an MOU, the process is consistent with the federal RCMP policy and CPIC—Canadian Police Information Centre—guidelines. This structured relationship, through an MOU, presents important quality checks for security; that is to say, chain of custody, to ensure the applicant cannot manipulate or impact the delivered results.

Section 18 of the RCMP Dissemination of Criminal Record Information policy contains accreditation and quality assessment review requirements for third parties, such as the NAPBS, that must be updated every two years, turning a critical eye to ongoing compliance. The police suppliers are bound to ensure they are following these terms and conditions, because it could potentially impact their ability to access CPIC databases if they are not in compliance with the policy, guidelines and the particular memorandum of understanding.

Speaker, approximately eight million criminal checks are done in Canada a year for non-criminal or civil purposes, such as employment and volunteerism. Just slightly less than three million of these are vulnerable sector verification checks, and of the remaining number, a significant majority is done by the NAPBS, with the remaining minority portion being completed by police front counters. This demonstrates the coverage and impact the National Association of Professional Background Screeners has on the whole.

While we're on the topic of micromanagement, I would also like to state that the government's defeat of the suggested amendment to 19(3), to remove the minister from the decision-making process, also stems from their need to micromanage Ontarians' affairs.

This reminds me of a case that was brought to my attention a few weeks ago of a constituent who, as a personal support worker, was required to have a police record check annually by his employer. However, unfortunately, he shares the same birthday as someone with a criminal past. Although they do not have the same name, nor are they the same person, he was required to have his fingerprints taken and was subjected to additional time-consuming procedures and, yes, monetary costs.

I believe in doing things right the first time. I have a saying, Speaker: When you mess up, you fess up, and then you fix it. While I support this bill and its aim to establish a standardized procedure for all bodies conducting these checks, there are more problems beyond the non-conviction records that would benefit from a

thorough analysis of how the complete process can in fact be improved as a whole.

Again, if our caucus hears a good idea and we think it's the best for Ontario, we will support it regardless of which party brings it forward. But it has to be a good idea, and it has to help Ontarians.

With Ontarians finding it difficult to find meaningful and well-paying work, this legislation will in fact ensure that honest, hard-working and peaceful citizens will be able to succeed without judicial prejudice in their preferred field of employment. And as more and more Ontarians are finding it increasingly difficult to secure meaningful employment, Speaker, I'm confident that this bill will mobilize more Ontarians who are able to work but have faced discrimination due to a past circumstance or situation.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association puts the number of Canadians with a police record as high as one in three. That means that in Ontario there are as many as four million people who have some form of non-conviction record. Many of these people may not even know why they were not accepted for a position that they were fully qualified for. With this legislation, they will be allowed to review their record before it is sent to the prospective employer.

More importantly, they will now have the ability to challenge and request a reconsideration of non-conviction and non-criminal information that their record check contains.

Speaker, in our democratic society we have been taught that "innocent until proven guilty" is the way it should be; however, this ideal has not been upheld across the board. Traditionally, our social understanding of what it means to be "clean" and "safe" has been incongruent with information recorded and shared on police record checks. One of our most fundamental beliefs as Canadians is, in fact, not applicable to this specific arena. Police checks including information related to non-convictions as well as sensitive, personal or medical information is wrong, and I'm glad that we can all agree on that particular issue.

I must, however, note, though, that it's become more increasingly evident that police are being forced to provide services or interventions to individuals experiencing mental health issues. One could understand why it has traditionally been included, even though the release of personal medical information is, in fact, prohibited by law. Essentially, our police officers have been thrown into a role typically reserved for psychologists and/or physicians as they are increasingly ordered to provide relief for the ever-increasing scope of mental health.

I'd also like to take this time to commend the men and women who serve Ontarians as police officers, but I don't believe that they're the ones best suited to handle these issues. Speaker, I am confident and I am sure that they will also agree with me on this issue. Police officers are not psychologists. Having police deal with the overwhelming surge of mental health issues is, in my opinion, just wrong. While many communities have worked

together to implement services and interventions alongside police officers, police should in no way have the ability to disclose these instances in their police record check reports.

Finally, we have an opportunity to put an end to this, and I'm happy that, although we may not all agree on everything, in essence, this bill, Bill 113, is in fact good for Ontarians.

Currently, in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, there are 48 children awaiting a Big Brother or a Big Sister. Like many organizations today who are experiencing a shortage of qualified volunteers, this bill will help to ensure that more and more people are afforded opportunities which were once wrongfully denied to them.

This bill will also afford those who may have incorrect information on their record the opportunity to have it amended.

Overall, this bill is good for society and is good for Ontarians. Yes, Speaker, I, as well as the entire PC caucus, support Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, despite the fact that many of our amendments to make this bill stronger were defeated in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to take a bit of time on this because it's something that I think most of us would have come across in our constituency offices over the years. I have, unfortunately, had the case where constituents have come to my constituency offices in Hearst, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock, Timmins, Mattice or Constance Lake, wherever it might be, and complained that something that happened in their past, that might not even have been something that they were charged with, ends up being inside their records. Then, when it comes to them being able to travel abroad—get a passport, leave this country and go into the United States—or maybe try to apply to be bonded for a particular job that they have applied for, that information that's in the record from 15, 20, 30 years ago stays there at times and prevents the person from being able to move on with their lives and do what has to be done.

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It was always a difficulty because there was very little in the way of ability to remove that stuff from the record. In some cases, the individuals weren't even convicted. They were pulled over by the police. There was a report that was made. That information ends up in the record somehow or other, and because it's there and a border guard has access to it, let's say in the United States, then all of a sudden that information shows up and becomes a barrier for you to get into the United States. I've actually had people who have called me from the border—not called me personally, but called my constituency office from the border trying to get across.

There was one not that long ago; I guess it was sometime last spring. The person had gotten trained to become a driver of a rig. This gentleman was in his forties at this point, and when he took the training in

order to do what it is that he's got to do, he gets his licence—not a problem; he drives the rig and gets a job. He comes to go across to the States and all of a sudden he essentially got blocked access to go into the United States because something showed up on his police record from the time he was a kid in high school—well, kind of a difficulty. We managed to get it worked out because it was not an issue for which he was convicted. It was only an issue on which he was charged, and eventually it was worked out, but the employer had to allow the rig to be essentially put aside as all of this stuff was worked out. Obviously you don't work this thing out in a day. It took us a couple of days to work our way through it.

This bill, hopefully, would allow us to fix that a little bit better than what it is now as far as being able to have better rules by which the records will indicate if a person was charged and convicted of a particular crime, and also give an ability for the person, once applying for a pardon, or something has been done that they served time for some years ago, to get that information off their record. I know one of the issues that happens at times is that somebody was charged and convicted of a particular crime under the Criminal Code. They serve their time. They do what they have to do, and then after a period of time they apply for a pardon. Until the Conservatives got to power federally, you were able to apply for a pardon and there was actually a chance the pardon would be granted. If you essentially served your time, you didn't cause any trouble, you were not involved in any way with the activity you were charged with in the past, you were able to get a pardon from the federal government in regard to your criminal record.

Again, you end up in a situation where you may have been able to get the pardon, but that information sometimes stayed in the record and then the record would be used against you in the sense that you may not be able to travel abroad, you may not be able to be bonded, you may not be able to have access to things that other people in society are able to do. Our system of law says you have to live as a citizen and not break the law. If you do break the law and you're convicted, you've got to do the time. You've got to pay the penalty. You've got to do the time. You have to make restitution for what it is you've done.

Well, in cases where people have actually gone out and done that and have decided, "You know what? I'm going to stay straight; I'm not going to do that kind of activity in the future," their record at times could be brought back to where—it's frustrating, and they say, "Well, jeez, I'm doing everything I can essentially not to live that life that I used to live before," when it came to those things that the person may have been charged with and convicted for, but they get frustrated because the information sometimes didn't come out of their record. That could be a real problem, especially when it comes to employment and when it comes to mobility of travel.

It's a good thing that the government brings this bill forward. Is it what everybody else wanted? Was it a bill where people can say, "Everything I ever asked for is in

this bill"? Absolutely not. But I think it is a step in the right direction and, for that much, it's a bill that is worth being able to support, in order to allow those people greater flexibility in being able to have their record—to make sure that if there's something that remains on the record and they've paid the time, it's in their past and it's no longer applicable, to be able to remove it.

That being said, if a person has been charged with a serious offence, obviously that information is going to stay on the record. There are times where we want the information to stay in the record: If the person was charged with a sexual crime of some type, especially against children, or there is some serious offence that the person has done. This bill is not about—and I hope not—removing those types of pieces of information from the record. That's not what this bill does. A person who has done a serious offence would still have that information show up on their record. Obviously, it would have to be something for which they have been convicted. But there are a lot of cases where a bunch of teenagers are hanging out, they go out, they do something stupid one night; they decide they are going to go out and buy a bag of pot or do whatever it is, and they're pulled over by police. I would hope that people don't do that, but now it's going to be legal under Mr. Trudeau's tenure as Prime Minister—which I find is kind of interesting, because if we were talking about decriminalization, I'd probably be supportive of that. I don't know about legalization, but that's a whole other debate. It's for the federal House; we'll let them deal with it.

But my point is that sometimes we do some silly things when we're younger people, and it's not meant to be that we are going to be into a life of crime. It's just one of those things that happens in your youth. When I was growing up, in high school and in grade seven and grade eight in Timmins—I never did it, but there were a lot of people who stole cars. That was the thing that some people did back then. My brother and I, I remember, used to run away from buddies of ours because we knew that if we ever got caught, my dad would lock the door and throw away the key; we would never get back into the house. So we stayed away from any of that type of activity. But there are people, unfortunately, who went along for the ride. And if you got caught, you got charged. Something like that could be affecting your record for a very long time. Was it a smart thing to do? Absolutely not, for the 15-, 16- or 17-year-old who got into that activity. But is it something that they should pay for the rest of their life, especially if there was no harm done?

I think what this bill tries to do is to look at those types of cases and to say that this is something where there isn't a cost to society, the person is not in a position to give any kind of idea that the society is at risk, because the person has a clean record. It's to allow that type of situation to be dealt with so that people can go on with their lives and become valuable contributors to our community.

With that, Speaker, I just wanted to put on the record that I think this is a step in the right direction. Obviously,

there's a balance in all this stuff, in making sure that we don't end up where people who shouldn't have their records cleared are cleared, and I think the bill tries to deal with that in a fairly adequate way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Balkissoon has moved third reading of Bill 113. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a request from the chief government whip to defer this vote until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes, pursuant to standing order 28(h).

Third reading vote deferred.

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER PROTECTION AND ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR RENFORCER LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA SURVEILLANCE DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2015, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / *Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

1520

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, thank you, Speaker. I thought that I might have a little more time, but in the absence of time, perhaps the presence of water would help. If I could have a couple of glasses, that would be wonderful.

I do have a little bit of time on the clock today. We may not use it all because—oh, but then again, maybe we will.

Bill 112: One of these times when the intentions of the government were certainly noble, but then—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Stop now.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of Transportation says, "Stop now," because even he has come to believe that that's not possible. It's in his words; he said, "Stop now." Perhaps he knows something that I don't know; that the intentions of the government were, in fact, perhaps not so noble. But I do appreciate the help from the minister. It's nice that he wants to pitch in and help from time to time.

But no, I honestly say that—gosh, do you remember, Speaker, years ago when Marketplace did the exposé on

door-to-door retailers of energy contracts? I'm sure you do, and I'm sure everybody in this House does as well. I remember my good friend Shane Pospisil, former assistant deputy minister in the Ministry of Energy and also, following that, the CEO of the Ontario Energy Association, helped spearhead some changes to the legislation that made the industry more responsible for their actions. They tried hard to weed out the rogue agents and stuff like that. They made changes that would make it better for consumers here in the province of Ontario.

Then, a couple of years ago, the government here brought in some other legislation that made further changes with respect to how consumers would be treated: verification of contracts etc. But in this bill, I think they've gone a little too far. We made that clear in committee.

I'll say to my friends in the third party here—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Friends?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I do consider them friends, in the broadest sense of the word.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Are you broadening the ownership?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I'm broadening the ownership of friendship—broadening the definition of friendship.

I say "my friends in the NDP"—the reason I say that is that the NDP have a belief—and more power to them. At least they stand by their belief on this and they don't play around. They believe that there should be no such thing as an energy contract business out there; they should all be banned, full stop, not for sale; no energy contracts. You buy your energy through the channels that are set up such as LDC or Hydro One, the big LDC. That's what they believe, and that's great.

We don't happen to share that philosophy. The Liberals aren't sure what philosophy they share, so they keep coming up with legislation that tries to make them appear to be the great protectorate of the consumer, but deep down, they just have an identity crisis. They're just not sure who they are or what side of the fence they want to fall on.

So they brought in Bill 112 and it made some changes that I thought were too far. Here we are in third reading, after the amendment stage. We did propose some amendments to the bill. One of those amendments was accepted because it made sense. Two of our other main amendments were not accepted, and I do believe that they would make sense as well. So, as I say, if you're trying to say, "This sector of our economy no longer exists and we're banning it completely," then so be it. Bring forth the legislation. I'm sure the folks, my friends in the NDP, would support it.

But they haven't done that because they're not really clear, as I say, where they stand on this. In fact, I think my friend from Mississippi Mills would probably say they're not sure where they stand on a lot of things.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thought you were our friend.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I'm talking about the Liberals on that. Don't get so sensitive. Go back to your

iPad. But if you're going to pay attention, you've got to pay complete attention.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, it's not an iPad; it's a Windows 8 machine. I have better class than that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay, Windows 8. What would I know about technology? I'm the old-fashioned guy.

Anyway, the Liberals aren't really sure what they're doing about anything. They wanted to make a statement, and they've made a statement. But here's where I think they've gone too far. We brought in an amendment. In this bill, anybody who is in the business of selling electricity contracts cannot be remunerated in any way that is commission-oriented. So they're saying, "You can't earn a commission for selling this particular product."

Well, would it not be appropriate, then, that the government come out and say that commissions are no longer legal in the province of Ontario? Of course they're not going to do that, because there would be a hue and cry that you could hear from Moosonee to Point Pelee and all points in between, because it would be ludicrous for them to do that. But they're taking one sector and saying, "You can't pay your employees on the basis of a commission."

One thing about commissions that has always existed is that it is an incentive to work hard. Obviously, we have to establish rules so that people are working ethically and treating the customer in an honest way, but working on commission—my wife works on commission. My wife sells real estate. Should the practice of her earning a commission for selling a piece of property be banned? I think not. Yet the government has decided that in this particular sector, commissions will be banned.

We're very disappointed in that decision, because it's not justified for any reason other than that they want to make a strong political statement without making the full statement: "We're not going to allow the sale of energy contracts anymore." So they're continuing with the practice, but they're hamstringing the industry to the extent that it may result in the end of it anyway. They haven't got the cojones, as they say, to come out and say you can't do it anymore.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think I have to caution the member on his choice of wording. Obviously, it has created an outburst on the other side of the House. I would ask him to be very careful of the wording he is using in this House, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker.

They lack the intestinal fortitude to actually stand behind their conviction. They would rather protest on a word than bring out a piece of legislation that actually says what they really want to do. So they bring in Bill 112, which bans the practice of remuneration by commission. I'm very disappointed in that, because again there is no justifiable reason for doing so; none whatsoever.

The other amendment we have proposed—I can't for the life of me understand why the government would be

against that amendment, but let me back up just a little bit. There is now a verification process in the legislation, which the government brought, that you would have to have a waiting period of 20 days in order to actually proceed with a transaction. Think about this: Even if it's at the customer's initiation, the original government legislation said you have to wait 20 days.

Speaker, if you're buying a product, in this day and age—you're buying a new car, and you go over to the Ford, GM, Chrysler, Toyota, Honda, whatever dealership and you make a deal on a car. And then the Liberal government watchdogs come swooping in onto the dealership and say, "Congratulations, Mr. Speaker. You've bought yourself a car. Oh, but by the way, you can't have that car for 20 days. You're going to have to confirm that you actually want it."

1530

Can you imagine what would happen to those Liberal government watchdogs that came swooping down on the car dealership? They would be found—or maybe not found. Maybe, like Jimmy Hoffa, they wouldn't be found. People would say, "That's not the way we're going to do business here in the province of Ontario. If I want to buy something, I should have the right to do so."

So the government agreed to our amendment that would reduce that period from 20 days to 10 days—at least some kind of accommodation that if I want a product, I want it as soon as possible. People shop online all the time now and when they get that product they want it and they want it quick. I haven't done much online shopping, but I must say, any time—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Cyber Monday.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What's that, Jimmy?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Cyber Monday starts today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Cyber Monday starts today. That's right.

Anything that I have bought online, I have been absolutely amazed at the speed at which it has arrived.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Twenty days?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, no. God, sometimes the next day, a couple of days, and that is up in Barry's Bay. It's not the easiest place to get to.

But when I make that deal, I want to buy that. I want to buy that and I want to get it as soon as I can.

Here is—

Hon. David Zimmer: Especially the LCBO.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You can't buy online there, I say to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, because they'd have to verify that you actually can legally buy that product.

Mr. Norm Miller: You can buy wine.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Can you?

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We brought an amendment that would allow you to verify that contract online. So you want to buy something now from one of these energy retailers; you agreed to it. There is this waiting period, which they reduced to 10 days, and our position was that you should be able to do that verification online. You

should be able to go online and say, "I, John Yakabuski, agree to a contract with dah-dah-dah-dah for product X beginning at such and such a time." But the Liberals say no; no online verification. And I say this to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville—he's playing on some kind of a technological gizmo there right now. He loves that stuff.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. The member is welcome to comment on the bill but not to make an allegation against other members pursuant to standing order 23(h).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would never condemn a member for using an electronic gizmo while in the chamber; however, I would ask the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to resume his speech. He has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. I'm not sure what word he objected to, so we'll withdraw the word "playing." He's doing something on some kind of electronic gizmo over there and—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, sorry. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville on a point of order, I gather.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the same point of order: The member may not either impute motive or make an allegation against another member, and the choice of the member's word did both. I refer the Speaker to standing orders 23(h), (j) and (k). It is the second time I've raised this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't believe the member has a valid point of order.

I return to the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. He can point-of-order himself into oblivion. Perhaps, when he joins the Legislature on his future planet, they won't have points of order.

Anyway, Speaker, here is the technological guru here—the member for Mississauga—Streetsville—who always likes to talk about how in tune he is with technology and how he's into the latest thing, this or that—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I've already ruled that the member doesn't have a valid point of order, but I would ask the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to make sure that his language is temperate and appropriate for the Legislature and not unduly—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Bombastic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):—bombastic. Sure, that's a good word.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member's point of order—Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. I refer the Speaker to standing order 23(b)(i). The member must

actually address the subject of the bill. The last time I checked, I was not the subject of that bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That is a valid point of order, in my opinion. I would ask the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to address the bill with his comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. The member is the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Energy that brought forward this legislation, and in the committee he was the one who led all the decisions with respect to the amendments that we either approved or did not approve. He was the government lead in the committee. So is he part of the discussion? Absolutely. In the absence of the Minister of Energy in the committee—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In the committee—thank you, member for St. Catharines. He has awakened, as well.

In the absence of the Minister of Energy in the committee, he was his spokesperson, and he was the one who made the decisions as to whether these amendments would live or die.

This is part of the public record. The man prides himself on being up to date on technology all the time, yet when he had the opportunity to allow technology to take its course and allow online verification of a contract in this day and age, 2015, he chose to go the way of the Luddites and say, "No"—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You mean Jim Bradley?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes—"you're going to have to use the telephone." In Liberal Ontario, online verification will be unacceptable. You'll have to get on the phone. I want to look at this, what happens with regulation. Maybe he'll actually come out with something that has to be a rotary dial. You're going to have to do your verification, Speaker, with a telephone.

So instead of getting on the computer or on one of those gizmos that apparently you can use in the Legislature here today—it's amazing, because the member for Mississauga—Streetsville or any other member in this House can be using one of these gizmos in the House. He could be verifying an energy contract right now on his gizmo, but he couldn't be verifying an energy contract by telephone because you can't use a telephone in the Legislature.

It's just in keeping with the advancements in technology that they would allow today's technology to be part of the equation. They had a great opportunity, still, to show all the protection they want to show for the consumer. But let's do it in a way that actually says that we've have come out of the Dark Ages here in the Ontario Legislature and we recognize that so many things are done online today. What would be the problem? I've got a feeling that there is going to be a bill coming forth and it is going to say, "To all members of the assembly: email is now illegal. Get out your pen and paper and start writing!"—

Applause.

1540

Mr. John Yakabuski: —to which Jim Bradley would say, "Hallelujah." Well, I say to the member for St. Cath-

arines, unfortunately—not unfortunately; maybe unfortunately for him—the reality is we are not going backwards. Technology only ever moves in one direction. It gets faster and faster and more advanced all the time.

Yes, there can be some glitches. We understand that. Look at that computer program that they brought in at the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Glitches? That was about a \$400-million glitch, so it can happen. But that was not the reason why the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, stood in committee and blocked this amendment. It wasn't because he was concerned that there were going to be glitches. It was just that the Liberals can't let it happen that another party in this Legislature would actually come up with a good idea.

We came up with an amendment to the legislation that said, "Okay, we get it. You are going to have to have 10 days to verify a contract. You'll have to wait 10 days to get that technology or that service that you want." Ten days. Okay, I get it. But can you not, from the comfort of your home or wherever you have access to your electronic devices, go online and verify in a secure fashion your transaction?

Now, I would in no way—because I don't want another point of order, Speaker—imply that I know anything about the member's life, but I suspect that he may have been part of an online transaction at some point in his lifetime, and he has probably talked to many, many people about how convenient that was, for him to be able to do that online, rather than have to do it the old-fashioned way.

You had a great opportunity, I say to the member. If he spent less time thinking about what his next point of order was going to be and more time thinking about how he could actually help the consumer—this is not something that would have any negative effect on the consumer whatsoever. It is something that the consumer is wanting, and demanding, in fact: the ability to make their transactions as convenient as possible.

It's done securely, whether you're using the things like PayPal or—what are some of the other ones?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thought you weren't into technology.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I listen to my kids from time to time. They usually send me a note electronically wanting money.

Mr. Bill Walker: You can go back to the "White-Berry" then, though.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

If this—I kind of lost my train of thought there. But this is what consumers want. They want to be able to do that. They have these gizmos, they have these pieces of electronic equipment, and they want to make the most use of them. Yet they're being told, "Get on the telephone and wade through 'You have reached,' and 'If you want to speak to so-and-so, press 2. If you would like the company directory, please press the star'—oh no, sorry; press the number sign.

So they've got to go through this rigmarole, and then, if you have any doubts about where you're going, it goes,

"You have pressed an incorrect key. Please call again later. B-e-e-e-p."

But that's what it's like in Liberal Ontario, wherein the consumer would like to say, "My team is losing the football game," the hockey game, whatever. "You know what? It's 10 days." They pour themselves a cup of tea—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, a beer.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay, whatever—go to their room or whatever they like to use for solitude and privacy and when they don't want any distractions, and get on the computer and verify the contract for that service that they so badly want. They wish they could have had it nine days ago, but the member for Mississauga—Streetsville said no. So now, "I'm still going to get that product, but, oh, it's 9 o'clock at night. There's not going to be anybody there. Oh, I've got to wait until tomorrow. Why can't I just do it online?"

So I ask myself, and I ask the member—I made all these arguments at committee. You know what the Liberals said? "Oh, no, no, no. We want to do it backwards. You've got to get on the telephone—full stop." We know the world doesn't stop for anything; it's not a static entity. It just keeps moving and keeps on spinning. That's what you get from the Liberals, because that's what you're going to get about this bill: more and more spin, just like you get every day here in question period—spin, spin, spin. They should turn it into a renewable energy source because it would never run out. Liberal spin is inexhaustible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: And now for something completely different. Maybe not as entertaining, though, I must admit.

I am pleased, though, actually to stand up today on behalf of the constituents of Kitchener—Waterloo and join the debate on Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. I will, at the onset, say I'm going to be borrowing heavily from my colleague from London West, Ms. Sattler. I did secure copyright permission, though, I just want to tell you—something we're still waiting for from the PC caucus, where you keep asking all of our questions. You should at least pay us for those questions.

This long title—and I'm going to be using the long title for the official title of the bill. I'm referring to the bill deliberately by that official title because I think it captures much more accurately what the bill is all about. It really reflects the intention of the legislation, which is to amend these two separate acts in two very different ways. That is much different from what the government would like to present as the true intention of this legislation when they refer to it as "strengthening consumer protection," because it doesn't, and "electricity system oversight act," which it does, to the detriment of the people of this province.

Now, we are used to dealing with these titles of these bills which say one thing but actually do another. Just a

few examples: Bill 106, for instance, Protecting Condominium Owners Act, which doesn't even deal with the issue of Tarion. Do you remember Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, which actually set up a barrier, essentially, for the children's advocate in the province of Ontario to not have it come under Auditor General oversight? There is, once again, this walking contradiction around legislation that comes from the Liberal Party; and it's discouraging, quite honestly, because they have such potential to actually make substantive changes which could impact the people of this province positively.

As I mentioned, the official title clarifies that Bill 112 is actually two different bills, and only the first part of Bill 112 has really anything to do with consumer protection. The second part of the bill, which includes amendments to the Ontario Energy Board, or the OEB, really does nothing to protect consumers. In fact, the amendments that are proposed in Bill 112 will do the exact opposite. They will undermine consumer protections by eroding the power of the Ontario Energy Board to review and regulate large-scale electricity transmission and distribution projects that are deemed by the government as priority projects.

This is a significant shift. This will give the government the ability to exempt projects like the privatization of Hydro One. We have all heard from constituents that Ontarians feel that they have a right to be part of the decision-making on that incredibly valuable asset, but of course they will be exempted from participating in decisions like this under this proposed legislation.

1550

I'd just like to point out, to be consistent, that this is exactly the opposite of the sales job that we got during the last election. This government was going to be more open and transparent. This government was going to involve more consultation. This government was going to operate from this activist centre. Who knew that at that activist centre there was this Walmart sale, the fire sale of Hydro One? I mean, it's just incredible.

People across the province—80% of the people in this province—have shared their concerns with this sale. For us, it's a complete feeling of helplessness in the face of all evidence, including the most recent Financial Accountability Officer's report. He points out very clearly that there will be a reduction in general revenues; there will not be a reduction to the debt. In fact, this will have long-term financial consequences which will negatively impact this province. This Premier promised to put evidence above partisanship, to put research and evidence into making decisions and embed it through policy creation. It's totally a 180 on the sell-off of Hydro One.

We believe strongly that the sell-off of Hydro One deserves the scrutiny that every Ontarian should bring to this place. We have encouraged people from across this province to contact their MPPs—their Liberal MPPs—to share their concerns, because those concerns are real. That is why we as New Democrats have brought all of

our opposition day motions to the floor of this Legislature, because the people of this province have asked us to do so so that there can be an open debate. At every turn, though, this government has shut the door on the democratic rights of the people of this province to actually have a say in what happens with Hydro One.

We have heard repeatedly during question period the government reassuring Ontarians not to worry: "You will have the protection." This is what they say. This is a direct quote: "You will have protection from rate spikes that we know are going to happen in the wake of the privatization of our electricity system, but you will be protected because the OEB is there. The OEB will monitor hydro rates and will ensure that consumers are treated fairly, that they are protected." This is the big promise.

One wonders, surely, though, that if the government actually was sincere about wanting to strengthen electricity system oversight—which is what the bill claims to do with its short title—if the government was truly interested in and committed to protecting consumers, then why is it not allowing the OEB to review the sale of Hydro One? Instead, we are seeing, in this bill, cabinet being given the authority to make an order declaring that a transmission project is needed as a priority project. It's really quite something.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No. We've got transmission lines that go nowhere in the province of Ontario.

This embeds, once again, the politics into the electricity system.

It was really interesting. I don't know if you caught any of Mr. Dalton McGuinty's interview last week. It's very creative writing, I must tell you, the revisionism on where cabinet was around the decision to move gas plants and how he didn't really know what was actually going on because he had put people in charge, even though some of those people had direct connections and pecuniary interests, financial investment into those decisions that they would financially benefit from.

He said, "You know what? I trusted those people and those people let us down." Well, really, the responsibility of leadership is just that, Mr. Speaker. It goes right to the top. I think, in the context of the electricity file in this province, it bears repeating that the Financial Accountability Officer—which we negotiated to come to this place because if there was ever a government in the history of the province who needed that sober second thought, if you will, or that "Just in case, you might want to think about this," it would be this government.

The Financial Accountability Officer, thank goodness, of his own volition, of his own incentive, came forward and presented the report on the Hydro One sale. And it was really interesting because, for obvious reasons, we put more weight with that report than we do with the fall economic statement we received last Thursday.

The Financial Accountability Officer very clearly outlined that the sale of Hydro One, in very short order, is going to negatively impact the revenue that comes into

this province. Then, one of the first sentences in the fall economic statement is the government saying, "Well, if revenue falls, we're going to have to use some other tools to address the shortfall." You have the government that say, "We have to sell Hydro One to fund infrastructure" even though no other province does this, and even though it's a complete and utter false choice that if you were to actually stop the sale of Hydro One, all infrastructure investment would end. It's completely a false choice in that regard. The FAO points out that revenue will drop; he has done the economic modelling to show that. The fall economic statement says, "If the revenues do drop, we're going to have to do this."

Very creatively, I guess, this government is doing what Mr. Snobelen did way back, in education. Remember? "Let's create a crisis in education and then we can bring in some very big changes." This government is doubling down on the crisis that it has already created through clearly not having the appropriate financial controls on spending and the oversight from a fiscal responsibility perspective, especially with the privatization of public services. We have Auditor General report after Auditor General report which point, quite honestly, to this government's incompetence in following through on the operationalizing of ideas—like road maintenance, for instance, or the Ontera deal, just as an example.

In what world would a government hire consultants to the tune of \$6.5 million to come out with a price for Ontera of \$6.1 million, when that asset was valued at \$61 million? That's the kind of Liberal math that the people of this province are going to continually have to pay for, and it definitely falls on the government's deaf ears for some reason.

Quite honestly, the fall economic statement that came out last week really is a road map for the continued privatization of this province. We don't have to go down that road if this government did what they were supposed to do, if the President of the Treasury Board would actually address the lack of financial controls and oversight around the contracting out, and if the finance minister would start investing in job creation strategies that actually work, instead of giving hundreds of millions of dollars to corporations and going to a press conference and cutting a ribbon. That's not how you build Ontario up. In fact, I might respectfully say that in many respects, that's how you actually pull a good, strong province down and hurt the most vulnerable people in this province.

What we saw last week in the fall economic statement was really another billion-dollar shuffle. Trying to follow the money in this place is becoming more and more difficult. There are some shells that are constantly moving, I would have to say.

Ms. Cindy Forster: They're being juggled.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They're constantly moving. That's why, just on the energy file, I did ask this morning—in the last fiscal year this government forced Ontario's electricity consumers to pay \$956 million in debt retirement charges on their electricity bills—\$956

million. That was in the last fiscal year. These charges were supposed to pay down the residual stranded debt left over from the old Ontario Hydro. But instead, last week we found out, when the fall economic statement was released, that only \$400 million went to the residual stranded debt. So what did the government do with the other \$556 million? That's a big question.

Ms. Cindy Forster: You asked him that this morning.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I did, and I did not get an answer. I know they don't call it "answer period." I know that's why they don't call it answer period, and we live it every single day here.

Just to get back to how this bill is actually going to play itself out, Bill 112, the bill that we're currently debating, allows the government to bypass the public interest needs test. That's what we're saying about Bill 112. It allows cabinet to make an order declaring that a transmission line may be needed as a priority project. If such a declaration is made, the bill says that the OEB "shall accept that construction, expansion or reinforcement is needed when forming its opinion."

1600

Electricity and energy advocates from across the province have raised red flags, red Liberal flags; there are a lot of Liberal red flags going up across the province. They have all expressed significant concerns about the implications of allowing the province to bypass the needs test that has been in place through the OEB. This bill weakens the OEB, since what this effectively does is, open the door for the government to push through politically driven pet projects like we see with Hydro One. They're formalizing the terrible experience we've just gone through with Hydro One. They're really just formalizing it.

It gives the government the ability to go full steam ahead without any kind of public process, without any kind of regulatory oversight, to take on risky and expensive transmission projects that may not be in the public interest. This government's record, even on transmission lines, my colleague has already identified. We already have transmission lines that go nowhere—full stop. It really is not clear us to on this side of the House why the government needs the power to bypass this important needs test process, especially when we've already gone through moving around gas plants like chess pieces in the province of Ontario and this latest Hydro One deal.

We've heard, though, that the Minister of Energy claimed that the changes are necessary to give the government the authority to initiate transmission projects, as if they didn't already have this authority and this power. And it's important to keep in mind that the government has the power it needs to initiate and champion priority transmission projects right now. You don't need this piece of legislation. There is no reason whatsoever for the government to seek additional authority to push through transmission projects without the review from the Ontario Energy Board and without determining whether the public interest is served. I'm going to get to

consumer protection, but this is not a piece of legislation that we can support, because it is clearly not in the interests of the people of this province.

For obvious reasons, the government would like to keep the focus on the first part, the part where they talk about consumer protection. They know that there is huge need for consumer protection from aggressive door-to-door salespeople who employ, quite honestly—and we have evidence to prove this—unethical, shady and sometimes ruthless practices in their interactions with people as they try to sell electricity contracts. It can't be a fun job, but these people can be very aggressive. I think all of us would have seniors in our communities who have fallen prey to these salespeople.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Not only seniors.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not only seniors; that's very true.

These electricity retailers too often prey on seniors and others. They prey on vulnerable people, people on fixed incomes, people who may be newcomers and don't have English as their first language, people who may have low literacy skills and are intimidated by someone at the door aggressively asking them to show them their hydro bill. Oftentimes, people aren't even aware when they give this information over that behind the scenes they may end up being subscribed to a service they did not sign on for in the first place.

This is a long-standing issue, Mr. Speaker. It has taken this long for this government to bring forward a piece of legislation which does not even address the core problem. Just to recap, this problem first emerged back in 2002, when the electricity market was deregulated and retailers were allowed to enter the electricity system and go door to door to promise consumers that they might pay higher rates.

Ms. Cindy Forster: That Ernie Eves.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know. That's the old party, though. Now we've got a kitteny-cottony sort of version of a new party.

These people went door to door to promise consumers that they might pay higher rates but they would have the stability of fixed rates. That was the promise back in 2002. By 2004, as electricity rates were skyrocketing due to privatization and deregulation, it was clear that something had to be done. Deregulation was abandoned at that time and the regulated price plan—do you remember the RPP, because you were here actually—was introduced to help cushion consumers from the impact of those hydro rate spikes. The RPP is reviewed twice a year by the OEB so that it better reflects the true cost of producing electricity.

I know I'm not the only MPP in this House who regularly gets emails from constituents who talk about how skyrocketing electricity rates are making it very difficult both to do the family budget and to do business budgets. We just saw a report this summer about what a serious impediment the inability to budget for electricity costs is to business growth and development in this province. Actually, that was the Ontario Chamber of

Commerce. They came out publicly because they were hearing lots of stuff from this government—

Ms. Cindy Forster: It also makes it difficult for families to do laundry—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, laundry at midnight.

So there's 2002, 2004. Certainly, there is widespread anxiety and fear, and with real justification, that the privatization of Hydro One is only going to make this problem worse; that we're going to see even more ups and downs in the rates—skyrocketing, out-of-control hydro rates that are really going to disadvantage people who are on fixed incomes and are barely able to budget for food and rent, much less deal with rates that go all over the place from month to month.

In particular, small businesses—our small and medium-sized manufacturers are hurting, and they are incredibly concerned about the instability of hydro rates. Because there are businesses that can't choose to just work at certain times of the day. They just can't. Again, they see the Hydro One sell-off for what it is: It's a quick cash grab so that this government can create the illusion of balancing a budget.

We've said—and now the Conservatives are saying it—it really is like burning the furniture to heat the house, but what we learned last week is that not only are they burning the furniture to heat the house, they're planning to put the whole house up for sale just so they can buy a little more time in that house. That's essentially what will be happening with the declaration that, as revenue drops, this province is going to have to use other privatization tools. They are setting the course, Mr. Speaker. We are incredibly concerned, and the people of this province should be very concerned as well.

Just to go back to the importance of consumer protection provisions, we know that the OEB plays a very important role in monitoring the practices of the electricity retailing sector. In fact, 70% to 90% of the complaint calls to the OEB concern door-to-door sales, misleading information and unethical behaviour at the door—70% to 90%.

There was another report that came out in 2012—that hot summer that we had—and it was called *The Power to Deliver*. It had some recommendations that were significant around the Electricity Distributors Association, which also recommended a full phase-out of energy retailers. So there's long-standing feedback from energy stakeholders from across the province on what needs to happen in the electricity sector, as I mentioned, going all the way back to 2002.

Happily, though, I can say that we have done our part on this side of the House. There is a mechanism right now in place to ensure this phase-out of energy retailing, and that is the private member's bill that was introduced by our colleague the MPP for Kenora-Rainy River, called the Ending Predatory Electricity Retailing Act, 2015. That bill, Bill 111, was introduced just prior to the government's introduction of Bill 112—Bill 112, which actually doesn't address the issue. The goal of that private member's bill is to phase out fixed-rate electricity

contracts for residential consumers, not simply to introduce some of the watered-down reforms that the government has brought forward.

Why? This is the constant theme. This is what I've learned in three years and two months of being in this House: When the Liberals get a chance to bring forward a piece of legislation, they only go a quarter of the way, and then they leave the heavy lifting for us. In a minority government, we actually could make that legislation stronger, we could make it better, and it could be more reflective of the real needs of the people of this province. In a majority setting, they don't want to play in the sandbox; they don't want to listen and they don't want this participatory democracy to actually be a participatory democracy.

The member from Kenora-Rainy River brought forward a really strong piece of legislation that really would end predatory electricity retailing in the province of Ontario, and it would phase out the fixed-rate electricity contracts for residential consumers. So it truly would be very effective. It's at the Standing Committee on General Government. We highly recommend that the government just call this bill. Let's get it done. Let's protect consumers in the province of Ontario.

Many of the provisions that were included in that private member's bill, the Ending Predatory Electricity Retailing Act, were also reinforced in the recent report that we received from the OEB called Consumers Come First. When I was reading this, I sort of got that Monty Python song in my head. I think this might be a movie soon; that's how strong the spin is from that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. It will be a commercial. The Auditor General won't get to look at it because they removed that oversight, as you remember, but it will be about consumers coming first even though the legislation does nothing about that.

1610

So here we are, on the last day of November 2015. Just to reflect, as I said, the majority of people have a serious concern about the Hydro One sell-off. The fall economic statement does little to instill confidence in this government's ability to actually navigate through the financial situation in this province. In fact, we have evidence to show that the government's plans hurt the economy. We feel strongly that the energy retailing system is a mess, and we highly recommend that the next bill you bring forward—just call it that, because that's the truth. That's the next accurate new title that should come from this government: "We feel strongly that the energy retailing system is a mess."

We won't be supporting this bill because it doesn't address the real issues of the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 22, 2015, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Delaney has moved third reading of Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes, pursuant to standing order 28(h).

Third reading vote deferred.

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / *Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 135. It's quite interesting: The whole debate all afternoon has been on trust. It's also been us in the opposition trying to get the government to listen to some of our concerns about some of the issues that have been happening in this fall session. Certainly, one has to do with energy in this province and the government's policies—and non-policies, it would seem—on hydro especially.

I would like to read a letter that I wrote to the Premier on November 5 concerning the Hydro One sale. It says:

"Your decision to proceed with the fire sale of Hydro One will have devastating consequences for the province and my constituents. As of today, there is no turning back. You have allowed the sale of Hydro One shares on the Toronto Stock Exchange, resulting in the loss of majority ownership of one of our largest public utilities. Many of my constituents have written to me to express their concern, even outrage, over your actions.

"They are right to be concerned, because this is a bad deal. Many people have told you so, including your Financial Accountability Officer; around 80% of the public, according to recent polls; 165 municipalities including the city of Stratford, the municipality of North Perth, the municipality of West Perth and the township of Wellington North, which I represent.

"Hydro One brings in \$700 million a year to the people of Ontario. Your sell-off, however, could net as little as \$1.4 billion for infrastructure funding. In fact, the Financial Accountability Officer has reported that in the coming years, your 'budget balance would be worse than

it would have been without the sale.' This is a devastating indictment of your policy.

"My constituents and I are especially concerned about the effect on hydro rates. With the loss of majority ownership of Hydro One, we will be forced to accept any changes made by the new owners—including higher rates—without the benefit of public oversight.

"Individuals, families and businesses have already paid a steep price for your government's expensive energy experiments. We know that rates in Ontario are now among the very highest in North America and, because of your policies, are set to go even higher. We need your absolute assurance that your misguided plan to sell off Hydro One will not mean even more rate increases. We simply cannot afford it."

Speaker, this bill that I'm speaking to this afternoon, Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning, certainly speaks to what I opened my debate on accountability and transparency with.

The new section 25.29 removes the IESO's responsibility to assess the current energy system's reliability, purpose, effectiveness and general use. Instead, it replaces a self-conducted assessment with long-term energy planning done by the Minister of Energy. The minister, with approval from cabinet, will issue a long-term energy plan once every prescribed period. Certainly, we don't know what a prescribed period is at this time.

The LTEP can address issues including cost-effectiveness of the energy sector, reliability and the impacts the energy sector has on climate change, prioritizing conservation and management of energy demand efforts, the use of cleaner energy sources and new technologies, emissions from the energy sector, consultation with aboriginal peoples and other communities, and any other matter the minister wishes. Essentially, the LTEP will be issued in line with the government of the day's political priorities, overriding the IESO in every way.

The new LTEP provisions force the minister to consult with consumers, generators, transmitters and aboriginal peoples. The minister must consider these consultations when developing the LTEP but does not have to publish the results of the consultation. There's no regulation surrounding how these consultations must be consulted. Again, this relates to honesty and transparency, certainly something the government has issues with.

It also says the minister must publish the final LTEP, which is the long-term energy plan, on a government website and publish any other information, such as key data and cost projections, used in the development of the plan, but only if the minister determines it should be made publicly available.

Speaker, it seems to me that with this type of legislation, it is an opportunistic way for the government to hide any criticism of what they are doing. As it says here, the minister does not have to publish the results of these consultations, and the minister will determine if it's made public. This is something that we, on this side of House,

have had issues with, certainly in this fall sitting and certainly when it was first announced that Hydro One would be for sale.

1620

The IESO may submit amendments to the plan to the minister. It is up to the minister, and not the IESO, to approve any amendments to the plan, no matter how logical or needed. Speaker, I think the IESO would have a lot more knowledge of the energy sector than the minister has, simply because they work in it all the time. If they have any suggestions that they think the minister should contemplate, it's up to the minister, as I said, to approve those amendments and, certainly, what he deems to be necessary in his long-term energy plan.

The minister must also approve the implementation plan, and can change any portion of the plan. There is no way for the IESO to raise objection to the changes or veto the minister in any way. Essentially, the IESO must do what the minister wants.

Speaker, I would suggest that there's really not much sense in having an IESO, because they are powerless. If the minister deems to make any changes to the long-term energy plan, he does it at his own discretion, and I would suggest that this is where politics can get involved. Certainly, we've seen what happens around election time, where this government has promised things in order to try to win the election, and then, after the election, they have backed off on their promises.

We certainly saw this in rural Ontario near my riding, in the riding of Huron—Bruce and, certainly, the riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, where a number of hospitals were promised money for renovations in the 2011 election—I believe there were six of them—and when the election was all over with, this government forget about five of them; I think those were the numbers. So, to make promises to win elections and not carry on with them, even if they don't get their way and don't win the election as they hoped to, although they did win a minority government at that time—certainly people in my riding think this is rather sinister and shouldn't happen. But this bill will give the minister power to do things under this type of legislation.

Also, under this section, the minister can force the IESO to procure contracts, which now can include transmission and energy storage. This, again, makes the IESO a puppet to the political goals of the government. The IESO must consult with aboriginals or other groups, as the minister sees fit, when producing these projects.

Speaker, I think we have seen, for the most part, what the Green Energy Act has done to rural Ontario. We have seen where it has changed the landscape. It certainly changed different things in the ridings. It put ridings against each other and put municipalities against each other, and this bill will certainly encourage that kind of behaviour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Isn't it further debate?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We're doing second reading—two-minute questions and comments.

I'm pleased to recognize the member for Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. I thought I was getting up to do 10 minutes, but now I'm getting up to do two.

Speaker, I have listened very carefully to what the member for Perth-Wellington had to say. He talked, really, about trust. I think that's what this bill is all about. We're asked to look at this bill and put all of our blind faith in what the minister says: "Trust me. I'm from the government, and I'm here to help." He's stripping away all the power from the Ontario Energy Board and the IESO and saying, "We don't need you anymore to do long-range planning on energy, because I'm going to do it. It makes more sense for me to do it, because I'm the energy minister."

You all know how well that has been working out.

We all know that nobody in Ontario voted for anybody who came to the door and said, "Vote for me, and I'll sell Hydro One." That didn't happen. Now, all of a sudden, it's up for sale. It's up for sale, and the people who own it—the taxpayers of Ontario—were never consulted, never had a say, were never asked to vote in a referendum on whether they wanted to sell it. Instead, the minister says, "Trust me; I know what's best. After all, I'm the energy minister."

Well, guess what? There are a lot of people—they come from about 185 municipalities; 80% of the population—who don't trust the government and don't trust the minister when they say, "Trust me," because they voted against the sale of Hydro One at the municipal level. They voted. The municipal governments have voted. The Liberals' own polling number: 80% are opposed. So we can't trust the energy minister to do what he says is best for Ontario. There's no trust out there for him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I do trust this guy.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I trust you too. You're a good man, and you represent your people well. I think that I'll sit down with you any time, because I know we'd have a shared sense of purpose.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting topic. Energy has had a very long and far less than distinguished history in this province for several decades. It's difficult to actually contemplate the state of the energy system in 2003 when the government switched. The honourable member opposite may be interested to know that there was something in excess of \$13 billion in necessary repairs. Of course, we could talk about the stranded debt, too, but I wouldn't want to do that today, because that might get us off the bill itself.

As for trust, I trust the Minister of Energy. I think he's doing a really good job of unscrambling some of the difficulties he has had to deal with. To make things clearer for people, I think there is some distrust out there; I would acknowledge that. But you don't eliminate distrust by sticking with the status quo; you try to fix it.

The best political advice I ever got was from the late, great Sterling Hunt, a beef and dairy farmer up in Lynden, who said to me, when I was running for mayor, "Ted, if you want to get elected, it's simple. Just tell the people what's broke and how you're going to fix it." When I'm stuck, I always go back to that. I think this is what this bill was attempting to do. It will undoubtedly bring more accountability when the minister has more skin in the game than he has previously had.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to stand and add a few moments of discussion to my colleague from Perth-Wellington, who always does a great job and is always out there representing his people to the best of his ability.

One of the comments he brought up, and that many of us have in this House, was about the fire sale of Hydro One. It has come to light again through the Financial Accountability Officer, through many organizations and from many, many individuals in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who have come up to me and asked, "Why are they going for the short-term gain? Why are they going to sell this just to make their budget miraculously balance by 2018, but the long-term pain we're going to suffer, as the people of Ontario; we're taking a \$700-million-per year revenue source out of our control? It doesn't make sense." I had numerous people of all political stripes come up and ask me the exact same question over the weekend at every event I was at. This government, when they inherited government, had the lowest rates of energy on the continent, and now we have the highest.

The Deputy Premier, in the last week or so, I think, probably said the real truth on W5: "We are out of money," meaning the Liberal government has run us into a hole and we're out of money. There are concerns with accountability that have been brought up: power taken from the IESO and given to the minister for the long-term energy plan. How has that worked? We have the worst energy policy in the province, probably in the country and perhaps in the world.

1630

My colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh brought up trust and blind faith: "Just trust us." Yet they stripped accountability from the Auditor General, from the Ombudsman and a number of other people who are officers of this House. Just now, the Minister of Municipal Affairs suggested it was an interesting topic. I may agree with that, but to the people of Ontario, it's not an interesting topic; it's a critical, essential need and a service that they rely on. They heat their homes with it. Seniors have to do that. Business: It's one of the biggest factors for them. Schools and hospitals have had to have their budgets go up because of these exorbitant, high costs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak briefly to the government bill, Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

I'm hearing speakers from the Liberals get up and talk about how there's going to be more skin in the game for the minister, and there's going to be more accountability and transparency. Well, in fact, that isn't going to be the case with this bill. The bill actually requires the Ontario Energy Board to implement directives as issued by the minister and approved by cabinet with respect to the construction, the expansion and the reinforcement of transmission systems as opposed to being independent, transparent and accountable. It's really an erosion of the Ontario Energy Board and not an improvement.

There's been a lot of stakeholder reaction to this bill. Energy consultant and lawyer George Vegh wrote a thorough review of these governance changes in Bill 135. He says, "It could lead one to wonder whether there are any checks and balances left in the system at all" by the time this Bill 135 passes third reading.

I hear from my constituents; every day they're sending me letters. The member from Kitchener—Waterloo today talked about the \$566 million that is missing in action from the debt retirement charge. I have emails from small business, from medium-sized businesses in my community, saying, "What's up with this debt retirement charge?" His factory's hydro bill has doubled in the last couple of years. He doesn't know if he can continue to operate on the day shift. He may have to move to a night shift to actually pay his hydro bills. At the same time, these debt retirement charges, which should be going to pay down the debt, to get rid of this debt, are going somewhere into an abyss.

I don't think we're going to see any improvements with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Perth—Wellington. You have two minutes.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the member from Windsor—Tecumseh, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the members from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and Welland for their comments.

I, too, go by some advice that I heard from my mother-in-law. She just turned 93 years old on November 11. She still has her faculties about her and she's doing really well. One of the things she told me when I first got involved in politics was this if you keep this shut—your mouth—you'll hear more. That's something that this government seems to have an issue with: listening.

As I said before, 165 municipalities, including municipalities in my riding, and 80% of the public, according to recent polls, do not like this fire sale of Hydro One. This bill that we're speaking to this afternoon is going to give the minister more power to make decisions on his own and not have to accept the advice of agencies within the ministry that he has worked with in the past.

We've already seen what happens with this. Again, I mention the Green Energy Act that's affected rural Ontario in so many devastating ways but is also starting to affect urban Ontario because high hydro rates are coming this way in bigger leaps and bounds because of the Green Energy Act, which is certainly one of the

things that has gotten hydro rates to keep going up and up and up. It doesn't all have to do with rebuilding lines throughout Ontario.

This is so heavily subsidized that we're never going to get out of these subsidies. For about 20 years, we're going to be paying these subsidies. This is billions of dollars that the public—and now it's getting into urban Ontario. These rates are coming; they're going to keep on going.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. Once again, it's an honour to stand here in our provincial Parliament and speak on behalf of the good people in Windsor—Tecumseh. I guess that a lot of what I will have to say in the next 10 minutes or so will revolve around one theme, and that is trust.

That's right, Speaker. The government, through Bill 135, is asking the people of Ontario to take them at their word and trust that this bill is a good thing. The thing of it is, when it comes to trusting someone, we tend to look at the shared history we have with that person or with that party or with that government, as in this case. Bill 135 purports to establish a long-term energy planning process that is transparent, efficient and able to respond to changing policy and system needs. The minister sells his bill by saying that sound, prudent, long-term energy planning is essential to a clean, reliable, affordable energy future.

You'll forgive me, Speaker, but when I hear those words, I tend to believe they were written by the same ghostwriter who hands the speaking notes to the Liberals on the fire sale of Hydro One. You'll recall it's become their mantra: "We had no choice. We need to find the money to spend on infrastructure. We have no other option."

Now, I have no problem with the need for a long-term energy plan. I'd like to think that's what the Independent Electricity System Operator—the IESO—had been providing, in co-operation with the Ontario Energy Board—the OEB. This bill asks us to trust the Liberals when they strip power away from the OEB and the IESO and put it all in the lap of the energy minister and his cabinet colleagues.

That, my friends, is a huge leap of faith that we're being asked to go along with here. Think about it: We have two independent agencies and this bill wants us to go along with trusting the minister when he says that the OEB and IESO will become dependent on his decisions and follow his orders and follow his directions. Of course, he says, "This is all in the best interests of Ontario taxpayers." This is the same minister who was selling hydro, despite the express wishes of nearly 200 of Ontario's municipal governments. Even the Liberals' own polling numbers show 80% or more of the people in Ontario are opposed to selling their shares of Hydro One to private, profit-taking bankers and pension plans.

Hydro was created with the intention of remaining in public hands forever. They held a referendum and

another one a few years later, and hydro's customers voted by huge majorities not to sell their publicly held shares to private interests. Fast forward to today, and a fast-talking former banker says, "Ah, so what? This is what I think we should do." This is a man who has never been elected and he answers to no one.

This bill greases the skids to take away any oversight from the independent agencies: the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator. Instead, as we move forward, the power of oversight will rest with the Minister of Energy. No need for public hearings; no need to justify major changes to the electrical distribution system; no need for environmental assessments. If the minister says this is the way it is, the OEB and the IESO have no option. They have to do what the minister says. That's the issue of trust, Speaker, that I touched upon earlier.

You know as well as anyone in this provincial Parliament what the independent Financial Accountability Officer said about the Liberal plan to sell our hydro system. He said that selling hydro will put us further into debt. The Liberals like to say they have no option, no other choice but to sell Hydro One so they can build infrastructure. That's a hunk of baloney, of course—

Hon. David Zimmer: No, we want to build roads in Windsor.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We all know it's a hunk of baloney, but they figure if they say it enough times, maybe some of us will actually come to believe it. Fat chance, Minister.

1640

What we have here is a suitable plot for a trilogy series on Murdoch Mysteries. The mystery, of course, is, whatever happened to the Premier's pledge to run a transparent administration? Part two of the Murdoch mystery would be, whatever happened to the Premier's plan to run a progressive agenda? The trilogy might wrap up with Inspector Murdoch wrestling with the devil to salvage political souls and developing some kind of Krazy Glue to put back together the broken promises of this Liberal administration. Speaker, I think you would make a pretty good Inspector William Murdoch. Maybe the Sergeant-at-Arms could star as Inspector Brackenreid. Maybe Mr. B, our senior legislative attendant, would make a great Constable Crabtree. We'd have the mystery all wrapped up in three episodes.

I mean, seriously—this bill was written to give the minister the power to issue directives to the IESO and the OEB, telling them how to implement the minister's long-term energy plan. Let's change the name of this bill. Take a word out of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs—let's call this bill "the power grab bill." That's it; we're going to give all of the power to the minister. This is the power grab bill. So much for checks and balances. The way we do things now, when there's a plan to expand the system, the checks and balances come into the equation and public hearings are held and the public has a say; witnesses appear. The bill says, "Ah, no need for that, Eddie," and as quick as "Bob's your uncle," permission

is granted and the independent agencies are told to make it happen by order of the minister—you talk about an energy czar, one-stop shopping.

Speaker, the government would have us believe this is a necessity as we move forward. There's that trust issue again, that blind faith we're expected to buy into. It's like that old saying, "We're here from the government and we're here to help"—right up there with "the cheque is in the mail."

One of the first things the Premier did when she set her mind to privatizing Hydro One was to hand a \$4-million salary to the person she chose to run it for her—four million bucks, a hell of a lot of money.

If that wasn't enough, there's a kicker. I didn't realize it until I heard the parliamentary assistant to the energy minister, the member for Mississauga-Streetsville, speak in the House the other day. He talked about hydro needing private sector discipline. He went on to say that's why hefty salaries are necessary: so you attract qualified people. And here's the rub, at least to me: The minister's parliamentary assistant then waxed on about the added bonuses that would be available if the new Hydro One bosses met their performance targets. As if \$4 million wasn't enough, we learned there will be bonuses if performance targets are met—let alone that these are the guys who will be setting their own performance targets.

Speaker, you tell me: How do you meet performance targets in the private sector? Right you are; you bring in more profit for the shareholder. And how do you do that? Right on; you either cut services or see that the rates go up, or both. Raise the rates and—Bob's your uncle—performance targets are met and bonus money pours into that \$4-million bank account. Nice work if you can get it. It won't be New Democrats or the Conservatives getting it. Actually, who will be getting it—in the neck—will be the customers of Hydro One. This bill will see to that. It strips away the independent oversight in the guise of streamlining efficiency. It puts the decision-making and the long-term planning in the office of the new energy czar, the Minister of Energy.

Speaker, there's a trust factor in this bill. If the government wanted to earn our trust, they would have submitted their plan to sell Hydro One for a review in front of the Ontario Energy Board, and they would have gone along with us when we called for a referendum.

I tell you, I have too many people in my riding who are forced to rely on electric baseboard heating, and their hydro rates are soaring. They can't afford to pay any more, and this bill will take away their input into the public hearings where witnesses under oath would have had to justify their proposed energy plan for the future. That's the trust factor, and the government falls short on meeting the standard in this proposed legislation.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to speak in favour of Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act. This

act does a number of things, but one of the things it does is it enshrines a long-term energy planning process that is transparent and efficient and able to respond quickly to the need to change policy.

One of the things in the energy sector is that it's undergone tremendous transformations in the past few years as we've gotten rid of coal and moved to other forms of energy. One actually does need to be rather nimble about long-term energy plans. The legislated process that currently exists is known as the integrated power system plan process and it's really interesting that that process never actually works all the way through because it's very long, very cumbersome. What has actually happened is that in the last couple of rounds, in 2010 and 2013, we used a different process called the long-term energy plan process, which was able to get revisions to the long-term energy plan much more quickly, and that's the process we would be enshrining in legislation.

It does involve consultation. Let me tell you about the 2013 process. It included posting the LTEP discussion document on the Environmental Registry, then there were 12 regional sessions, including round table discussions with stakeholders and open houses for the public. There were 10 sessions with our aboriginal partners. There was an academic innovation session where people came in and talked about new ideas, innovative ideas. We received 7,883 questionnaire responses. So contrary to what you're being told, this is a very consultative process that we're enshrining.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the speech by the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. He raised a number of issues that certainly the members of the PC caucus do agree with, and certainly a matter of trust is one of them. We have an issue with a minister having total control as to what he is trying to do with the energy file.

It's interesting: I hear comments every once in a while about the minister responsible for poverty reduction in this province. The member from Windsor-Tecumseh brought up what could be a \$4-million salary for the top dog at Hydro One. That certainly helps him with his poverty reduction strategy; it certainly doesn't help those who really need help in this province. These exorbitant, huge salaries they're giving out to some executives in this province make people in my riding certainly wonder what is going on with this poverty reduction strategy when these types of things happen.

I think the member from Windsor-Tecumseh also brought up issues that since the minister will have so much power here and does not have to take recommendations from anybody, the way this bill is written, to make policy in this province on the energy file, and does not have to disclose to anybody, unless he wants to, if there are any public proceedings—well, they would be public proceedings—that leads us to believe there could be things that are hidden in his consultations that he

doesn't want to listen to, and we'll never know. Openness and transparency certainly will be thrown out the door.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

1650

Ms. Cindy Forster: The Ontario Energy Board is supposed to be independent and a regulatory authority. But this Bill 135 is actually just undermining the role of the Ontario Energy Board. I can tell you, Speaker, I've been around long enough—I sat on my local distribution company back in the early 2000s when hydro was first deregulated under the Tory government: billions in costs to local distribution companies, at that time, to get ready for deregulation, which then ended about a year after they spent billions of taxpayers' dollars. Then we had the \$2-billion gaffe on smart meters in 2006, and most recently, over the last two weeks, we've been hearing about up to \$4 million for the new head of hydro, millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to negotiate the IPO, as opposed to the shareholders being affixed those costs, at the end of the day, when the market opened.

Then we had Ed Clark, who wasn't charging us anything to do any of this hydro issue, but his panel of consultants got seven million taxpayers' dollars, and this year we're selling off 15%. All the while, the people who are paying the freight, the taxpayers, many of them in the north and in other places across this province, will have to either pay the hydro bill to heat their houses or make a choice of whether they're going to eat or go to their local food bank so they can actually heat their homes. So, I think this bill doesn't do anything to improve the lives of the people who actually pay the bills around here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to provide comments on the remarks by my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh, and begin by correcting a flat-out error that he made. He directly said, in reference to Hydro One, that the CEO would earn incentives over and above \$4 million. Let me read to him from the original Hydro One prospectus: "Chief executive officer base salary: \$850,000." That's a pretty good salary. Let me read, as well, some of the comments made on that in the Hydro One prospectus: "The target total direct pay for the chief executive officer for 2016 is positioned close to the average of the four other large utilities (although Hydro One is the largest of them all based on the various metrics noted ...), and is in the bottom quartile"—in other words, the lower 25%—"of the Smaller Subgroup" of the Standard and Poor's/Toronto Stock Exchange 60. "Similarly, the target total direct pay for the chief financial officer is in the bottom quartile of the Smaller Subgroup" of the Standard and Poor's/Toronto Stock Exchange 60, and so on and so forth.

So, Speaker, if the member had not actually read it, he certainly does deserve to correct his record in responding to the House. And if the member has read it, then the member has been reckless with regard to his use of information about executive compensation at Hydro One.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Windsor—Tecumseh. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I was referring directly to the Hansard quotations of the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, who talked about performance bonuses when he spoke to the House last week. That's all I was referring to. He's the guy who brought it up. Go back and read Hansard. You'll educate yourself.

Look, this is the same old gang that brought us gas plant scandals, the Ornge air ambulance fiasco, the eHealth boondoggle, smart meters that cost twice as much as estimated—fire hazards, in some cases—and now they are selling hydro without consulting the public. It's like someone woke up one morning and said, "Hey, let's get the old band back together. We'll sing the same old tune: 'We're from the government. We're here to help.'" I would rather hear "R-E-S-P-E-C-T." Let's have some respect for Ontario taxpayers and try to improve this bill, Speaker. That's the trust issue here.

Not one of those Liberals can look you in the eye and say, "When I campaigned in the last election, I went door to door and said, 'Vote for me, and I'll sell Ontario Hydro.' I did. I did. I really, really did." No, you did not. Nobody over there said they were going to sell hydro when they campaigned on the doorstep for a vote. Not one of those members went and said, "Vote for me, and I'll sell hydro." Now—now—they're saying that hydro is too important to be left in the hands of the public and we have to give it to the private interests.

You know what? It's really too much of a burden to put on the shoulders of one minister. We have the Ontario Energy Board; we have the IESO. Let them do what they were set up to do. Let them come up with a long-term energy plan, and let them tell us what is in the best interest of taxpayers. Don't leave it. It's the Murphy's law of administration over there: If something can go wrong, it will go wrong with this government.

Thank you for your time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm very pleased to rise today on Bill 135, the energy conservation and long-term planning act.

I do question the words "long-term planning act," because I would have to suspect the only excuse this government might have is that they haven't done any long-term planning. Every time we turn around, there's a new long-term energy plan. When you're talking about plans that take decades to build, I don't know how a plan can last a year before it has to be revised, unless it's being, basically, done from the hip, shooting off directives. I understand that the minister has issued, what, 30-some ministerial directives since his short tenure as Minister of Energy. That clearly shows lack of direction. I guess it would probably clearly show that we're just going in circles. That's what we we're seeing when we look at our energy bills.

I had a discussion with a farmer up at the OFA the other night. They were talking about how they used to be involved in a dairy operation. You can imagine: They had bulk tanks cooling milk, compressors, fans in the barn, a stable cleaner, lots of light, lots of work around the barn. Their energy bills are higher now than when they milked. He said, "I don't understand it. How can it be like that?" You can imagine that your business operates at a higher voltage, a lot of demand, and they're now in their home with—probably they have cash crops. That's consistent. That wouldn't have changed. But how could it be the same? Only because the rates have gone so high.

I guess, if they were businesses that were portable—if you're manufacturing cars—where you could move, they likely would have moved. But when you're farming, you have to use the land you have. You can't move. That's what we're seeing. That's why we see so many of our manufacturing jobs gone, because the regulation and the cost of electricity has skyrocketed to a point where they can't afford to be competitive. It's not that they wouldn't want to work here and provide jobs here, but if they did, the cost of their product would be so high, nobody would buy it. That's the problem: not that they don't want to be here, but they can't afford to be here. We see that in so many things.

I was actually at a Grey Cup party last night. Of course, I'm right down in the corner of the province and we have relatives and friends in Quebec. One of the residents was laughing at me because, he said, "You know, we used to have a province here that basically the North American municipal governments used to laugh at for being inefficient. You guys have taken over first place on this." He says that they've now eliminated their deficit, years before they actually projected, and they're laughing at us in Ontario because ours has gone out of hand—and much, much later than it was ever projected years ago.

Of course, this is a government that back in 2003, their leader at the time signed a document saying he would never run a deficit, never borrow money. Look at where we are today. We're actually to the point where we're having trouble servicing our debt. We're over \$11 billion. You can imagine what it would be like if the interest rates were the same rate under the previous Mike Harris government. It was up around 10% to 14% at the time. What would our interest be? At that time, it was getting to be as large—just a little bit less—than health care. This is the way you've run the government. They've taken the debt and doubled it.

You know, I look back at my—I had a bill in September at our house. I guess I have to apologize as I do have a swimming pool. Five hundred dollars for a hydro bill—\$500. Two people living there and their daughter—but how can a residential bill get to that size?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It must be a mistake.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Somebody said that it must be a mistake, but, of course, under this government, there have been a lot of mistakes made, and hydro is one of them.

1700

In talking about the salaries across here, yes, you can talk about the rate and trying to compare it, but we did compare it. Quebec hydro, which is double the size, is less than an eighth of the cost that they're paying this fellow to run Hydro One. At one time, this was a very proud organization. These guys have run it into the ground. They've overridden the Ontario Energy Board with making decisions that weren't in keeping—they weren't granting some of the pay increases these guys were granting. They turned down the increases, so what happens? This legislation takes them out of the equation. If the minister wants to do something now, he can do this without any worry about the OEB or the IESO actually being able to comment, because he's now in control of them.

We saw that with the Auditor General. He's removed power from the Ombudsman. The oversight over Hydro One is gone. You might wonder: Why would you do that in an open and transparent government? Because I really heard a lot of that in the last election—how you're going to be open and transparent. So why are they removing the power from the people?

When I saw the Auditor General's report from last December when it came out, it was embarrassing for this government, to the point where they tried to ridicule the credentials of the auditor. Of course, the public laughed at that, because it had much more experience than the minister did. So what did they do? "Well, we don't want any more of those reports, so we'll remove her oversight over the file."

We're waiting to see—last year, they kind of timed it for the day before we rose for Christmas break. It was a good time for the Auditor General's report. We'll see this year how late it comes. Obviously, they'd rather those reports come out when there's nobody to ask questions, because, again, they are embarrassing. And they should be, for what we've seen happen here.

I think it's important. We need to sit back and look at this electricity plan, look at our energy plan. We're talking about the Premier being over now at the climate change conference. We need to have an energy plan that works for this country. I'm a little bit worried that they're going to want to be a leader in some of the reductions we have. You've got to remember, we're a province that is already off most—we're servicing our electrical needs with nuclear power and with water power for something like over 85% of our needs. You can't expect us to have the same easy reductions as you might in China, where most of their electricity is generated by coal—and most of the world.

We've already done a lot of work. There's no question more needs to be done, but we have to take into—some of the ideas. We can't do what's already been done. We can't take credit for something that's already been done. The Conservative governments of the past built an electricity system on nuclear power and water power, foresight that really—we have a system that doesn't create the problems that many of the others have. Sure,

we had some coal. We had a plan to get rid of the coal, and the Liberals followed through on it—not in the four years that they promised, but in 12 years they were able to get off coal. There needs to be more consideration done when you're affecting the lives of so many people.

I look at some of the scandals we've had. We talked about the hydro salaries. The member opposite talked about trusting them: Why don't we trust their documents? Since I've been here—it's only been a short period of four years—we see some of the things they asked us to trust them on. Ornge: They hid that for years until finally the story broke in the paper—an embarrassment, a police investigation. Next were the gas plants. They told us they cost a fraction of actually what they were. Of course, the Auditor General embarrassed them again with figures that showed that there were over a billion dollars in costs.

The next thing, we find out that records go missing. You know, what is this about transparency when you go in—and the information officer was very clear that either the records were deleted or you're running a government that's not in the spirit of democracy. You have to have records. There have to be checks and balances. This government did everything they could to make sure those checks and balances were gone, and now we see more actions through this bill here where it does more of that.

I think the people of Ontario expect more. They expect a government that is transparent and fair and, I guess, smart enough to put together a plan that would be good for the economy and good for the people of this province, and instead of being forced into cutting back some of the health care services we used to have—I wish I had more time, but it's a plan that we see, every time we turn around, there's just more and more and more issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry raises some good points around the track record of this government. I think that we just need to get it very clearly on the record as to what Bill 135 does do.

They are officially, with this piece of legislation, abandoning once and for all the vision of an independent and transparent long-term energy planning and approval process, one that had been established back in 2004. By removing their planning and approval authority and relegating the OEB and IESO to the role of implementing the government's plans, it would become even easier for private interests to lobby the government to approve costly and risky energy projects without being subject to independent public scrutiny. That's the intent of this piece of legislation.

The member did address a little bit about the trust piece, but I also think it's important to note that for the third time in a year, this government is using a progressive policy—in this case, energy efficiency improvements—to embed or bury changes that upend electricity policy in Ontario without public review and with unknown impact.

You don't have to take our word for it; the stakeholders have weighed in. Energy consultant and lawyer George Vegh wrote a thorough review of the governance changes in Bill 135. He says very clearly, "It could lead one to wonder whether there are any checks and balances left in the system at all." I think the member makes it very clear that if there were ever a government that needed checks and balances on the electricity file, it is this one, and through this legislation they are removing that from themselves. The people of this province are going to pay the price for that, no doubt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: The part of this bill that I really am interested in is conservation. One of our government's key goals is energy conservation. Conservation helps families and businesses to save money on their energy bills, reduces the need to build expensive energy infrastructure, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, creating a cleaner future for our children and our grandchildren. As an educator, that interests me a lot. I do have two grandchildren, although they are both adults now, 24 and 21. But let me tell you, I have to be talking to them about conservation all the time. When they come home from university and bring everything they've worn in the last three months, they start to do the wash in the washing machine during the daytime. I have to speak to them and say—

Ms. Catherine Fife: At peak hours?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: At peak hours. I speak to them and tell them, "You know what? When you're sitting and playing your games at night or doing whatever you are doing, put in a load and go back and get it later, as the rest of the family does." We do all of our washing in the evening.

When you go out to buy appliances, those stickers on the front used to be nice stickers and you didn't pay much attention. The good news is that we will be working to make sure the standard for energy-consuming products and appliances would set water efficiency standards for appliances that consume both energy and water, like dishwashers and washing machines, allowing Ontarians to make the best choices for themselves when shopping for appliances.

I agree with this bill. I look forward to further debate.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise today to comment on Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning.

I'd like to acknowledge the comments by my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. He did a really good job articulating the problems we have in Ontario today on the energy file. I know when I was up in his riding at the plowing match, many of his constituents, like mine in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, complained a lot about the energy file in this province. They

know that this government is on the wrong path and has been for a very long time.

Of course, the issues I hear regarding energy, first and foremost, is the fact that energy prices are going up every time you turn around. We know, in the long-term energy plan, that rates are set to rise almost 45% prior to 2018. Like our leader, Patrick Brown, has said, people are actually choosing between heating their home and eating. I think that's a sad state of affairs here in the province of Ontario, when government policy has forced people to make that type of choice.

Of course, in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex I continue to hear about the Green Energy Act. Recently there was another round of announcements regarding the forced wind turbines across rural Ontario and in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. The people know that this is driving energy prices up. It's forcing small businesses in my riding, seniors and families to hardly be able to afford to keep the lights on.

One story I just want to get on the record is that I have a small grocery store in my riding. Last year its hydro bill was \$8,500 for the month of September; this year it was \$10,000. That's what the Liberal government has done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House and reply to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I did listen intently to his remarks. I agreed with the vast majority of them. I particularly enjoyed the part where he talked about the problems that farmers, specifically dairy farmers, face paying Ontario's hydro bills.

I have, I guess, the pleasure of living on the Quebec border. I know specifically that at this point in time farmers across the five eastern provinces get paid exactly the same for their milk based on their components. The people on the Quebec side are making more money, and quite a bit more because dairy farming is very energy-intensive—you have to milk the cows, cool the milk and ventilate the barn. Cows, for a lot of people who might not know, have very weak respiratory systems. They're very, very prone to pneumonia. The way to overcome that is to have a very good ventilation system. That's the way to overcome that.

A very good ventilation system costs money to run because most of them, for dairy farming 101—I like talking about dairy farming. There are two ways to ventilate a barn well: Natural ventilation where curtains go up and down, or tunnel ventilation where you put big fans on one end of the barn, and the warmer it gets, the faster the fans go. They're both effective and they both cost money. You can very well see, because dairy farmers do studies on how much it costs to produce milk, and at this point Quebec farmers are making more money for a couple of reasons; and one big one is that their hydro is half what Ontario's is. That speaks for itself because it wasn't always like that. That's something we have to keep in mind.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return now to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Barrie, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I think the member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about the checks and balances and how this bill has removed them, along with other things this government has removed, whether it be the Auditor General, the OEB. We see more and more checks and balances in the system, and unfortunately, the long-term energy plans are anything but.

The member from Barrie talked about conservation. One of the issues that I'm a little worried about is that we don't have enough people using the power we generate today. You could shut down all your green energy, and we'd still have a surplus.

I was talking to a farmer, not in my riding but in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. It was cheaper for him to put a generator in and produce his own three-phase power. That was power that normally would have been bought from Ontario Hydro. More and more farmers are looking at this and looking at it being cheaper now to get off the grid. Who's going to pay for the grid? The grid is a sunk cost. They've got to be paid for. I guess this bill will allow them to outlaw people like farmers buying power cheaper than they can get it from the grid. If you look at that, some of these things that it's talking about would make that illegal, or could make it illegal.

So here we are. I've heard that some of the larger businesses looking at staying in Ontario are going to have to generate their own power. This would control that. Unfortunately, it talks to a bigger problem, and that's the cost of energy. If you can produce power off the grid on a one-shot small installation, what does that say for the economies of scale that should be there? They aren't there.

We look at the trouble with farmers. Farmers in our province have a lot of extra costs. Whether it be energy or whether it be the regulations around pesticides, they're making it very hard to do business in this province. I guess with farmers you can do that. They can't take their land with them. But it's a problem for businesses, and they've left.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House, and today to add my remarks to the record for Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning. I must say, it's not one of their flashier titles, but this is a very concerning bill.

We hear a lot from the government side about how they're very interested in the conservation part of this bill. The conservation part is actually very small. It's kind of the first paragraph. If you take the explanatory notes, it's the first paragraph in the explanatory notes. It

basically puts a bigger focus on being able to monitor energy use in buildings—not only energy, but also water.

I'm not opposed to the principle, but one of the members on the other side talked about energy-efficient washing machines. The one thing that people are forgetting—again, I'm going to go back to agriculture. One of our bigger energy users in agriculture is greenhouses. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh would know a lot about greenhouses. They use a lot of energy, and they're big buildings. They might come under this regulation, that they're going to monitor how much energy they're using.

Something that someone from the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance brought up to me—it's a very good point, and I think it should go on the record again—is that to truly measure how energy-efficient something is, you have to also measure the production. You could have two greenhouses, Greenhouse A and Greenhouse B, of the same size. Greenhouse A might use more water, more electricity and more gas than Greenhouse B, and you would say, "Oh, that's very inefficient. We've got to clamp down on Greenhouse A." But Greenhouse A might be producing a third more production than Greenhouse B, and actually, per unit produced, Greenhouse A would be much more efficient.

That's something that we have to always keep in mind: It's not just with the washing machine. If you're going to put regulations in—and the greenhouse industry is worried, and they have every right to be, and a lot of other industries should be worried. If you're going to talk about energy conservation, you also have to talk about the unit of production from that energy. I think that's something that this government hasn't really put a lot of thought into. So that's the conservation part of this bill.

The electricity part of this bill is basically that this bill takes the onus from the IESO and the OEB and puts it on the minister. We'll use the OEB as an example. The OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, when it looks at a project, is supposed to look to make sure that one of the criteria is that the project is good for the people of Ontario, good for the population; that the overall population will benefit from this project. That's a good thing. We have our issues with the OEB sometimes, but that is one of their main roles. This legislation takes that role and makes it a secondary role. The first role of the OEB will be to listen to the minister. So the first decision regarding energy on big projects won't necessarily be for the good of the people. It will be a political decision.

1720

We've had those political decisions in the past. I think smart meters were a political decision. It sounded good. They didn't really think about how it would work, and the results have been very questionable, specifically, I'd say, in northern Ontario.

I'd like to get a plug in for my part of the world. We had a lot of trouble with smart meters in the great riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. At one point—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: They work in my house.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm glad they work in Barrie, but they don't work in a lot of Timiskaming. The reason we were given by Hydro One is—and they worked with us really well at the end, but at the start it was really difficult working with them. The Ombudsman's office helped us a lot. But one of the reasons they gave us is that they don't read well where there are obstacles like rocks and trees. In northern Ontario—surprise, surprise—there are a lot of rocks and trees. So somebody didn't really do their due diligence and find out where these things were going to work. Why? Because it was a political decision.

This also refers to The Green Energy Act. We support the Green Energy Act. We support green energy in principle. But what happened was that the Green Energy Act superseded the Planning Act. So all the things you have to take into consideration when you plan in a province, in a municipality, were superseded by the Green Energy Act. And what did it cause? It caused mayhem.

I went through lots of planning processes when I built buildings on my farm. But if somebody wanted to build right now—if somebody wants to build a solar farm in Timiskaming-Cochrane, it's easier to build a solar farm in Timiskaming-Cochrane than it is to build a barn. Does that make any sense? Absolutely not. And that's going to be even worse with this bill.

There's something else that's really interesting with this bill.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: What's that?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Minister. Section 25.32.1 is enacted to specify that no plan, directive, direction or other document issued or provided under sections 25.29 to 25.32 is an undertaking to which the Environmental Assessment Act applies. So not only is this bill giving immense political power regarding energy decisions, it's also taking away a lot of the power of the Environmental Assessment Act. In my region, we've had lots of trouble with projects that have been exempted from the Environmental Assessment Act. And do you know what? Most companies—mining companies, forestry companies—comply because they know. They've got a good story to tell. They work hard. You would never get a mining company or a forestry company to say, "We want to be exempted from the Environmental Assessment Act."

Why does this government feel it's fine to exempt, possibly, their new private friends at Hydro One from the Environmental Assessment Act? Does that make sense to you, Speaker? It doesn't make sense to us at all. Why would this government undertake to remove a large portion of the electrical system from the Environmental Assessment Act?

I think I marked it in yellow here where exactly—it's 25.29. It's quite a bit of the bill, Speaker, that's going to be exempted under the Environmental Assessment Act. Again, it's like going back to the Green Energy Act. The Green Energy Act superseded the Planning Act, and that was the problem. The Planning Act also has its problems, but it has a reason.

The NDP corner of the House is not against regulation. We're against bad regulation, and we're also against removing regulations for no apparent reason. What this government is doing is removing—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Ernie's your uncle.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, Ernie is my uncle, and that's why I'm NDP. I tell him that all the time. He's also my favourite uncle.

Mr. Bill Walker: Today.

Mr. John Vanthof: Every day.

What this government is doing is it's claiming to be open and progressive. For election campaigns, it's open and progressive; as soon as the campaign is over, they privatize faster than the Tories. The Tories would never get away with selling Hydro One, truth be told, and these guys are getting away with it; and now every bill that we see come before this House regarding energy is removing more and more regulation from the energy sector.

First, they privatize a big portion of the energy sector because they need to pay the bills; that has become very evident. This has got nothing to do with transit, this has got to do with paying the credit card balance; and, now, with several of these bills, they're taking environmental regulations out of the picture. This is not what an open, progressive government should do, and those of us in the NDP are extremely disappointed that this government is taking these actions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me pleasure to spend a couple of minutes on the passionate speech from the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

My first part of the comments is basically that, in general, it seems that this side of the House does everything wrong every day. The challenge is that I haven't heard a better suggestion from the other side. So, yes, we're in government, we're not perfect, but folks, just remember: I haven't heard a suggestion about what you would do. It's fine to criticize, but when constituents come to my office, they normally have an issue—whatever that issue is—and they do speak. So then I say, "Tell me how you'd fix it." I welcome their input. I haven't heard any input from the other side when we talk about selling Hydro One.

I was around in the municipal sector when there was a whole bunch of downloading to the municipalities. That's why I'm here. I remember when they gave away the 407.

So let's be realistic. Give us some good suggestions, not just because you're in opposition, and you just want to oppose—I understand that.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You're against protecting the environment; is that what I hear? I hear from the member across that they're frankly dead set against the environment.

I would say, bring some good stuff to the table, except whine, whine, whine every day; because that's all we hear—and I understand that's why you're there, but let's be constructive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 135. I agree with the member from New Liskeard. He articulates things well and he's bang-on.

This bill is nothing but a bit of window dressing to fine-tune a few things, which is creating more red tape that we don't need in Ontario, to justify a faulty program overall that this party has delivered to us. We have the most expensive electricity in North America, which is driving out jobs, which is impoverishing the people that live here; and they're at a point where they can barely afford the electricity to heat their homes, for the lower-income people.

When we become a government that forgets to look after people, we forget what our job is. The job of government is to help people, not things. These people are looking after things. They forgot their job.

The sale of Hydro One is a mistake: We keep the debt, we sell the assets for a fraction of what they're worth and we lose the profitability that comes along with Hydro One that it would deliver in the future, as the Financial Accountability Officer articulated to us about a week or two ago when he gave us his report.

1730

We can move on to the green energy part of their energy policy, and overall that is the biggest financial fiasco that has ever happened in North America, and that's why we have the most expensive electricity in North America. We don't need wind power or solar power to have green power. We could have bought it from our neighbours in Quebec at a reasonable price. We chose not to do that. We sole-sourced contracts to Korea to buy power at an exorbitant price that we can't afford, and here we are in an unfixable mess. We get to keep the debt. We have to sell Hydro One to pay for the Green Energy Act and impoverish our people. What a failed experiment and what bad government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. Every time he gets on his feet on a bill, he comes at it from the perspective of a farmer or somebody from the agricultural sector. Speaker, we can actually apply those words that he says to every business, every agency here in Ontario. It actually just puts it into perspective so that it makes sense, so people can actually understand it.

To the member from Barrie, who talked about mothers playing on their computers and that they could just throw in a load of washing in the evening in between games on the computer, I would say to her that many of the people who live in my riding are actually working their second job in the evening, actually trying to make enough money in their minimum wage jobs, because of the positions we find ourselves in here in the province; that they aren't even home in the evening to throw a load of laundry in the washing machine between 7 and 11. Others, of course, are out with their kids, perhaps involved in some

activities, like jiu-jitsu and skating and those kinds of things. After they've worked all day, they frankly don't want to do a load of laundry at 7 o'clock at night.

To the member from Northumberland-Quinte West, who talked about us never having any good ideas: Well, we ram all these bills through to committee, and when we get there we hear from the deputations and 36 hours later we're at clause-by-clause. We can't get a Hansard to save our soul to even put forward any amendments. I would say, through you, Mr. Speaker, to that member that we need to hire some more staff here in the Legislature. If the government is going to continue to ram all this stuff through, then we need more staff to actually provide opposition parties with the information we need to make some amendments and some good ideas to bring forward to the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane sounds more like his uncle every day. A lot of people out there may not know that his uncle is the member for Oxford—the riding that used to be called Oxford—which is Ernie Hardeman. It's hard to discern which one is which when they get up to speak because the more he speaks in the House, the more he sounds like his uncle. Now, there's nothing wrong with that, but it is strange to have the so-called right wing and the so-called left wing agreeing with each other so often. But I digress from this.

What this bill is designed to do is to assist in finding ways of conserving energy—conserving water, as well—and that's exceedingly important. The member for Windsor, in the barracks in the back row, used to be very good when he was with the CBC, I might say. I always admired him then. But his own member from Toronto-Danforth is saying that conservation is the route we should be taking. This government now, in this legislation and through the regulatory framework, will in fact be encouraging, in a very strong way, energy conservation in this province. To assist overall, because of course there's a conference going on in Paris at this time dealing with global warming, first of all, dealing with that. There are a lot of deniers of global warming sitting across from me—I understand that—not in the NDP, but in the Conservative ranks. They're deniers of global warming.

But one of the things that energy conservation does is contribute to the effort to reduce the factors which contribute to global warming and, at the same time, to try to make it more cost-efficient for people to absorb and use energy.

I enjoyed the member's speech very much, though, as I always do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane for his reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank all of my colleagues and the members for their comments. I'm actually proud of my Uncle Ernie. We differ on views, but we both have very strong principles.

But in this bill, there's very little about conservation. It's mostly about trying to—they are selling Hydro One, so now they've got to change a bunch of legislation to actually get this done and help their political friends. That's what this bill is about. It's got a little bit of conservation. As whip of the party, we have a lot of people who want to speak to this. But often when bills like this are time-allocated, the public—because the committee is also very time-allocated. This time, I'm going to be the last speaker from our side, and hopefully this time the government will actually allow this bill to go through a real, true committee process so that the people who want to talk about—"I don't want to talk about conservation"—what is actually happening in our energy sector in this province are actually given the chance.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Longer than four minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right. This should have a full committee process. This government has got the chance to do this right now, and we hope they take this opportunity to actually let this bill go a natural way so that we have a full committee process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise today to speak for 10 minutes on Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a good debate this afternoon, very interesting. I know all members of the House have enjoyed this riveting debate on Bill 135.

I especially enjoyed listening to the deputy House leader for the government. I, in fact, remember serving him water as a legislative page about 25 years ago. Shortly after I arrived here as an MPP, after 2011, the member from St. Catharines said that he enjoyed me more when I served him water as a legislative page than as an opposition member, and I rise today to say that the feelings are mutual. But with all due respect, I always enjoy listening to the member from St. Catharines and his input into the debate. Of course, I vote him the best heckler in the House.

Back to Bill 135: Whenever this government takes action on energy, it is, quite frankly, a nerve-racking experience for the people of Ontario. When we look at Ontario's energy sector today, there really isn't anything to smile about. Hydro bills are higher here than anywhere in North America, and the government is going ahead with the sale of Hydro One, which practically no one in the province wants. I know other members have cited public opinion surveys showing that about 80% of everyday people in province are opposed to the sale of Hydro One.

Mr. Speaker, every time this Liberal government touches energy, our wallets get quite a bit lighter and we lose transparency on how our energy system works and who it actually benefits. The people of this province are left to decipher global adjustments, never-ending debt retirement, and what a majority share of a hydro company means for their bottom line in the government's muddled messaging on energy conservation.

When I did a two-minute speech, some feedback earlier on in this debate, I talked about this grocery store in my riding. Last September, in 2014, his hydro bill was \$8,500 per month; it's now \$10,000 this past September. And if that's happening for a small business in my riding, think of the large manufacturers, the large employers in this province. That's why Ontario, under this Liberal government, has become one of the most uncompetitive jurisdictions in all of North America—a sad day for the people of this province.

1740

The Auditor General has determined that the global adjustment will have cost the people of this province \$50 billion by the end of this year—\$50 billion. Most people don't know what the global adjustment even is or what it actually represents. The Liberal government has been far from clear about it. This is one small thing people have to try to decode to understand the convoluted failure that is this Liberal government's handling of the energy file.

Another confusing thing here is that while the government is selling off Hydro One, they've got this bill, Bill 135, that we're debating here again today, to centralize all transmission and electricity sector planning with the minister's political staff and cabinet, overriding the technocrats and industry experts at the IESO and the OEB. It's like they can't decide who is actually in charge of this ministry and this file. I'm finding that this centralization of power to cabinet is a common theme in many of the bills we're debating these days here.

Hon. James J. Bradley: In Ottawa.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: At Queen's Park. Ministerial discretion and the power of cabinet seem to be the order of the day. And as the member for St. Catharines talks about, yes, I agree that we're probably going to see this a lot in Ottawa as well.

Another thing this bill will do is amend the Electricity Act, 1998, and give the Minister of Energy, rather than the IESO, the responsibility for developing a long-term energy plan. The timing of this alongside the Hydro One sale is truly remarkable.

The Financial Accountability Officer, as most MPPs know in this House, is an independent authority and has made it perfectly clear that the Hydro One sale is terrible long-term planning. He said it's going to be good news next year, but as we go down the road, the news is going to get worse and worse, because this government is focused on short-term gains for their own political ends.

As the National Post put it clearly, "In simple, blunt terms, LeClair explained that the Liberals' plan to sell off 60% of Hydro One, the provincial power distributor, will cost far more than it brings in. While it may provide a short-term benefit to the government by helping it balance the budget in time for the next election, the gains will be brief while the costs run on indefinitely." And this is who is going to be in charge of developing a long-term energy plan? I'm guessing "long-term" in this context means until the spring of 2018. I doubt they have any interest in looking any further down the road than that.

The Green Energy Act is another fine example of this government's qualifications for long-term energy plan-

ning. The former Environmental Commissioner has made it very clear that the environmental gains are dubious at best; we have all seen what has happened to our hydro bills; and any one of my constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex can tell you about how detrimental wind turbines have been for our rural communities.

This bill promises that the government will consult with consumers, distributors, generators, transmitters and aboriginal peoples, but there is no requirement that the long-term energy plan be reviewed by the OEB, as was the case previously with respect to the Integrated Power System Plan.

This government loves to say it will consult and have conversations about everything, but there is no real weight to that, as people are clearly seeing now. It's intentionally vague. In reality, it means they can enact things just by the will of what this government wants to do unilaterally.

The act would also give the minister the authority to enhance the scope of the long-term energy plan goals and objectives respecting, among other things, "air emissions from the energy sector, taking into account any projections respecting the emission of greenhouse gases developed with the assistance of the IESO." Again, Speaker, we see vague and open legislation that empowers the minister and the minister's office. The minister will be making the plan and will also be empowered to issue directives to the IESO and to the OEB to implement this plan.

Bill 135 essentially cleans up some of the older statutes and aligns, I think, government policies and programs. Again, it has this implementation or this signal that it's sending, that the minister and the staff are going to really control the future of energy in this province. I think we're going to see more political decisions in the energy file, and that's bad for the people of this province.

I just want to talk about some other things when we talk about the energy file over the last 12 or 13 years in Ontario, apart from hydro bills going up and the Hydro One sale that the majority of people in this province are against. I touched on the Green Energy Act and what it has done to communities that I represent. People are adamantly opposed to these wind turbines being forced on their communities. I started speaking about this earlier. There are a large number of contracts being awarded, and construction is set to begin across southwestern Ontario. People in communities in southwestern Ontario and across the province are opposed, not just because they're forced by the Liberals in downtown Toronto; but it's what the renewable projects are costing businesses, families and seniors. In fact, one statistic I heard said that the cost of wind turbines alone is going to hit \$60 billion over 20 years—\$60 billion. If that's not accurate, I'd like the government to stand up and refute that and tell us what it's actually going to cost. We know it's one of the single biggest drivers of electricity bills going up.

We know that by 2018 hydro bills are set to go up by 42%. That's according to the Liberals' own long-term

energy plan. Again, it's sending a signal to employers out there that Ontario, under this Liberal government, is very uncompetitive.

The list goes on. Smart meters, as a number of MPPs have talked about—the smart meter scandal.

One thing that wasn't mentioned was the Liberals' pensions at OPG—lifelong pensions; some of them \$800,000 per year.

People in the province are sick and tired of the mishandling of this energy file.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. He touched a little bit on the consumer protection side of the equation, which is where I'd like to focus on, but also about the serious, serious disconnect that this government has around energy and conservation, because there's so little in this bill that actually would focus on conservation.

It's really interesting, because in 2008, then Liberal MPP Phil McNeely tabled Bill 101, which was the Home Energy Rating Act. In 2013, he brought another motion forward, where he debated a private member's motion indicating that energy labelling related to the energy efficiency of new and existing houses at time of sale should be enacted by the end of 2014. The NDP has spoken in support of making available to prospective Ontario homebuyers information with respect to energy efficiency at home—but what a missed opportunity to actually build energy efficiency into future homes, for instance.

That's why today, in my statement, I talked about RenewABILITY Energy Inc. They have drain water heat recovery technology, which actually should be built into all new homes because it's incredible. The consumption and carbon emissions can be reduced by up to 10% every day. They use a Power-Pipe. It's easily retrofitted into homes and easily installed in new buildings, and it requires no maintenance. But what happens? The energy code credits for this technology are available in Ontario, but they're not mandatory. They're mandatory in Manitoba. So you connect a good, progressive idea on conservation and on energy saving, and then you ignore it, even though you say that conservation is a priority. I think that a company like RenewABILITY Energy, which is doing amazing business outside of Ontario—I think this government should get out of the way and let them do their job. That's what I think.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It gives me pleasure to rise today and talk about Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

One of the things that I do want to bring to the attention of the House is a comment that was made by the opposition party: that you're tired of the mishandling of the energy file. We can say whatever we want in this Legislature, but I just want to bring to the attention of those who are listening that we are the first jurisdiction in North America to get rid of coal-fired plants.

1750

No matter how we cut this bill, this is the most important piece of legislation and the most important act that has happened. We've taken many, many—how many cars off the road?—millions of cars off the road, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. That is one of the major things that we need to keep in mind. We've saved billions of dollars, or we will save billions of dollars, in health care costs, so it's really important that we keep this in perspective.

Outside of the many different conservation measures in this bill, there are very significant, positive things. The energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings is extremely important. We lose a lot of energy through our buildings. The water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances—I know in my household, as well, I've got two teenage girls. It's a nightmare to try and keep the water conservation under wraps and it's something that with the advent of good technology, new technology, we need to keep pushing and focusing on. So I'm pleased to stand and support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It is a pleasure to add my comments to my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Not only is he an MPP who stands up and listens to his constituents, but he and his family are long-time, good small-to-medium business owners, so they're living this nightmare every day of the year.

He brought up hydro increases. We just had one on November 1. The people out there listening and watching are going to get one again on January 1; 42% by 2018. People are going to realize more increases in their energy.

He talked about a grocery store going from \$8,500 a month to \$10,000 a month. In my riding, we have a great Canadian icon, Chapman's Ice Cream. They have a 160,000-square-foot warehouse that they have to refrigerate 24/7 with hydro. Just think of what this global adjustment is doing to a business like that, and they proudly employ 600 people.

The member from Northumberland-Quinte West talked about, what could we offer them? What can we help them with? What they don't ever share with the public is that this Liberal government calls Niagara Falls and says, "Don't collect all that water"—our freest, cleanest, greenest form of power, and they're telling them not to do it so we can actually put highly subsidized wind turbines and solar energy on the grid.

He asked for some solutions and ideas. The first thing: Stop the further sale of Hydro One so that we don't take away that revenue source that we rely on.

Number two: Stand up and speak up for the people of Northumberland-Quinte West and don't take direction from the Premier on energy. I believe he actually believes in what we're talking about and he would vote if he were free to do so.

Put a moratorium on wind turbines and solar. We don't need any more energy. As my colleague from

Lambton-Kent-Middlesex said, we pay \$50 billion in global adjustment charges, and a half a billion a year to the States and Quebec to get rid of our surplus energy. We don't need any more right now. They killed the manufacturing sector. We don't need any more.

My colleague from Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry just reminded me that the PCs actually built nuclear, one of the most environmentally friendly forms of power we have, led by Premier William Davis. We need to continue to go down that path, Mr. Speaker, and make sure we're getting hydro rates that people can afford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Let me surprise my friends in the Liberal government and say to the member from Kingston and the Islands, thank you for getting rid of coal. Thank you for reminding us. You guys did a great job with that. Some of us really support it and we won't have coal-burning plants again. Thank you for what you've done for global warming.

To the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and the member from—I'm going to talk about Timiskaming-Cochrane a bit as well. But I wonder what our pages are getting out of all of this. Who knew when they came here that they were going to learn so much about the electrical grid in Ontario, hydro prices in Ontario? You'll go back to school and the teacher will say, "What did you learn?" You'll be able to go on and on and on for days talking about hydro prices in Ontario and how a certain government has messed up the system. Anyway, I digress.

I want to get back to something the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane said when he was talking about greenhouses. Down my way, greenhouses are a big thing. I was in a greenhouse the other day. You've got these little pods, right? They're about this big and cucumbers grow out of there, 15 feet to 20 feet high, and the owners experiment with different lighting. It's all computerized, how much water to put into the plant at any time of the day. Their water tanks—they recycle their water in there; it's all filtered—are huge, huge water tanks. When we talk about energy conservation, there's no one better at it than a modern greenhouse grower with computerized water recycling, water filtering and so on.

But they need more power down my way. They're getting a new transmission line. It won't be ready by 2018. It's already over-subscribed by people who want to tap into it two or three times more. There's a business case for more power for the greenhouse industry in Windsor and Essex county. They want to go 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, but the government won't give them the power to earn a living.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: A special thanks to the members from Kitchener-Waterloo, Kingston and the Islands, and especially to my friend and colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who, I might add, also has experience with the Home Hardware family. We hit it off

right off the bat. When we got here back in 2011, we shared some good old Home Hardware lumber stories. Of course, my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh continues to add to this debate and continues standing up for his constituents opposing the sale of Hydro One.

I would like to put on the record that the Liberals continue to forget this part of history. I was reminded of this when the member from Kingston and the Islands talked about the closure of coal plants. Everybody in this House should acknowledge the former Progressive Conservative government member from Kitchener–Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer, who was Minister of Energy when we closed Lakeview in the province of Ontario. So kudos to the Progressive Conservative government of the past—I know, Mr. Speaker, you were a member of that government—and, of course, to my former colleague and our former colleague in the House Elizabeth Witmer.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound mentioned the small business that I come from, a Home Hardware Building Centre, auto and farm supply store

and an LCBO agency store, and the cost of electricity—and this is what reminded me of it.

Interjection: Shocking.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's shocking even in our business. I remember in the summer my dad saying to me that for the first time in the history of our company the hydro bill in July hit over \$8,000. I talked about the small grocery store in our riding that was \$8,500 last September; this September, it was \$10,000. That's the story that every MPP—I don't care what political stripe you are—is hearing right across this province. This government has to wake up and start standing up for everyday people, not the special interests in the province of Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 6:45 p.m. this evening.

The House recessed from 1758 to 1845.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

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Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
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Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

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Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
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Kiwalá, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
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McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	

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Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
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Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiane (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
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Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
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Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Rural Ontario

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....6806

Blessed Cardinal Newman Catholic High School

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....6806

Sports halls of fame

Mr. Chris Ballard.....6806

Visitors

Hon. Steven Del Duca.....6807

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Estimates

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....6807

Report deemed received.....6807

Standing Committee on Social Policy

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....6807

Report adopted.....6807

MOTIONS

House sittings

Hon. James J. Bradley.....6807

Motion agreed to.....6807

House sittings

Hon. James J. Bradley.....6807

Motion agreed to.....6808

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Lung health

Hon. Dipika Damerla.....6808

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....6808

Mme France Gélinas.....6809

Private members' public business

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....6810

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hydro rates

Mr. Bill Walker.....6810

Newborn health

Mme France Gélinas.....6810

Lung health

Mrs. Cristina Martins.....6810

Health care

Mr. Ted Arnott.....6810

Health care funding

Ms. Peggy Sattler.....6811

Lung health

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....6811

Health care funding

Mr. Norm Miller.....6811

Privatization of public assets

Mme France Gélinas.....6811

Employment practices

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....6812

Newborn health

Mr. Todd Smith.....6812

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Peggy Sattler.....6812

Water fluoridation

Mr. Bob Delaney.....6812

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Budget Measures Act, 2015, Bill 144, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2015 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 144, M. Sousa

Second reading vote deferred.....6813

Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, Bill 113, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2015 sur la réforme des vérifications de dossiers de police, projet de loi 113, M. Naqvi

Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....6813

Mr. Norm Miller.....6814

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....6815

Mr. Toby Barrett.....6819

Mr. John Vanthof.....6820

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....6821

Mr. Gilles Bisson.....6823

Third reading vote deferred.....6825

Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015, Bill 112, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2015 pour renforcer la protection des consommateurs et la surveillance du réseau d'électricité, projet de loi 112, M. Chiarelli

Mr. John Yakabuski.....6825

Ms. Catherine Fife.....6828

Third reading vote deferred.....6832

Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, Bill 135, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2015 modifiant des lois sur l'énergie, projet de loi 135, M. Chiarelli

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....6832

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....6834

Hon. Ted McMeekin.....6834

Mr. Bill Walker.....6834

Ms. Cindy Forster.....6834

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6835
Mr. Percy Hatfield	6835
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	6836
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6837
Ms. Cindy Forster	6837
Mr. Bob Delaney	6837
Mr. Percy Hatfield	6838
Mr. Jim McDonell	6838
Ms. Catherine Fife	6839
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	6840
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	6840
Mr. John Vanthof.....	6840
Mr. Jim McDonell	6841
Mr. John Vanthof.....	6841
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	6842
Mr. Jack MacLaren.....	6843
Ms. Cindy Forster	6843
Hon. James J. Bradley	6843
Mr. John Vanthof.....	6843
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	6844
Ms. Catherine Fife	6845
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	6845
Mr. Bill Walker.....	6846
Mr. Percy Hatfield	6846
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	6846
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	6847

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 30 November 2015 / Lundi 30 novembre 2015

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6793
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	6793
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6793
Hon. Reza Moridi.....	6793
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6793
Hon. Dipika Damerla.....	6793
Mr. John Vanthof.....	6793
Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	6793
Mme France Gélinas.....	6793
Mrs. Cristina Martins.....	6793
Ms. Harinder Malhi.....	6793
Mr. Arthur Potts.....	6793
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	6793

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario economy

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	6793
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	6794
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6794

Ontario economy

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	6794
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	6795

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6795
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6795

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6796
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6796

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Todd Smith.....	6797
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6797

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6798
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6798

Forest management

Ms. Daiene Vernile.....	6798
Hon. Bill Mauro.....	6798

Winter highway maintenance

Mr. Michael Harris.....	6799
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	6799

Long-term care

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	6800
Hon. Dipika Damerla.....	6800

Hydro generation

Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....	6800
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	6800

Hospital funding

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	6801
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	6801

Hospital funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6801
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	6802

First Nations

Mr. Chris Ballard.....	6802
Hon. David Zimmer.....	6802

Family doctors

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	6803
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	6803

Poverty

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6803
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	6803

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	6804
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	6804

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Highway improvement

Mr. Ted Arnott.....	6804
---------------------	------

Climate change

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6804
-----------------------	------

Lung health

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry.....	6805
---------------------------	------

Janice Bye

Mr. Bill Walker.....	6805
----------------------	------

RenewABILITY Energy Inc.

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6805
-------------------------	------

Shoebox Project

Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	6805
-----------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover



**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Monday 30 November 2015

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Lundi 30 novembre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 novembre 2015

The House recessed from 1758 to 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bradley, on behalf of Mme Meilleur, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Chair of Cabinet to lead off debate.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant. The member for Scarborough Southwest is, of course, the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General.

I simply want to say, because I want to leave the lion's share of the speaking time to the member for Scarborough Southwest, that this is a bill that commends itself to passage by the Legislative Assembly. Indeed, as it suggests, it strengthens and improves government by amending and repealing various acts. It's a comprehensive bill, but I would say that it is one that has been looked at carefully—in first reading, of course, but particularly second reading and in any committee time it may have had, and now we're at third reading.

I want to say to members of the assembly that when I was first elected here, there was no third reading, or rarely was there third reading of any bill, and now it has become part—

Mr. Norm Miller: How long ago was that?

Hon. James J. Bradley: This was back when your father was a member, I say to the member for Parry Sound. When his father was a member, there was no third reading that took place; it was on a nod. Now we have a situation where the opposition has insisted upon some time for third reading. This government, which is very accommodating of the opposition's wishes on so many occasions, of course, is ensuring that this happens.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Do you remember who predicted that? It was you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Probably the member for St. Catharines may have predicted that at one time.

As I indicated, I'm sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, the member for Scarborough Southwest, who wishes to elaborate during this evening session on this excellent piece of legislation which I suspect, in a final analysis, may even garner the support of all three parties in the Legislative Assembly, so I yield my time to the member for Scarborough Southwest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to thank the Chair of Cabinet for the opening remarks. I have a few minutes to speak today about Bill 85 and start third reading debate. I'm pleased to rise today to begin third reading of the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

As the members may recall, in April this act was introduced to update or make corrections to 15 different pieces of legislation. While these modifications are relatively minor in nature, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that they will have a significant impact on the lives of many Ontarians, directly or indirectly. If passed, this bill will help improve the way government interacts with Ontarians. Quite simply, it will help us serve them better.

I want to take a moment to highlight some of these changes for you today, particularly the amendments that will help strengthen families, provide support to seniors, improve workplace safety and keep people moving across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

1850

Mr. Speaker, as you know, Ontario is currently creating an online service that will make it easier for parents to set up or change child support payments. This service will allow them to update child support payments without having to go to court, which often involves booking a day or a few days off work and arranging for child care. To support this project, we're proposing a small but important amendment to the Family Law Act. This change will ensure that parents who use the new online service have the same financial disclosure obligations as parents who obtain a child support order from a family court.

For separated parents, making financial disclosure mandatory is important because it helps them decide whether or not to apply to change their child support amount. This would provide single-parent families with better information to make informed decisions and to allow parents to receive the financial support that they need to raise their children.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, to helping families with young children, this bill will also ensure quality care in services that are provided to the elderly. Many seniors who are cared for at home or in long-term-care facilities often use stretcher transportation services to move between health care facilities. These are private service providers which are currently not regulated. To ensure our loved ones are well cared for during these journeys, we are proposing to create regulations in that industry. These changes will be spelled out in amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. If passed, these changes would require that drivers meet specific requirements for vehicle inspection and maintenance, and would mandate qualifications for staff and equipment. These changes are far overdue, as this bill will help set a standard of care for this industry, which has never been regulated before. Most importantly, it will bring peace of mind to many families whose loved ones use these services.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to tell you how this bill will help improve workplace health and safety for Ontarians. We're proposing to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to adopt new international standards for classifying hazardous workplace chemicals and providing information to end-users. These changes are part of a broader Canada-wide initiative. Under these new standards, employers and workers would have more comprehensive information about workplace chemicals. It would be presented in a standard format using clear and consistent terms, making it easier to understand than current labels and safety data sheets. As a result, Mr. Speaker, workers across Ontario will have greater knowledge about the effects of chemicals that they are using and they will know what precautions to take to work with them safely.

As the members here are aware, Ontario passed the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act earlier this year. This act focused on reducing collisions, injuries and fatalities on roads. But more importantly, it also provides protection to road users and increases penalties for distracted and impaired driving. I am pleased to say that this legislation passed unanimously. Building on this legislation, through the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, we're proposing to amend the Highway Traffic Act to enable a seamless implementation of these penalties, which would implement new driver licence suspensions for drug-impaired driving.

Mr. Speaker, this bill in front of us today will help to improve public transportation in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, otherwise known as the GTHA. It's no secret that gridlock and congestion are daily problems faced by Ontarians living in the GTHA who struggle to try to get to work on time and back home to their families. It is for this reason that we're proposing to amend the City of Toronto Act to help the Toronto Transit Commission, otherwise known as the TTC, expand its services. The proposed amendment would make it easier for the TTC and municipalities neighbouring the city of Toronto to enter into agreements to allow the TTC to operate local passenger transportation services in those municipalities upon mutually agreeable terms.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that supporting municipalities for the provision of transit services is vital to keep people in our urban cities moving. The Toronto-York Spadina subway extension, which will extend the subway 8.6 kilometres from the existing TTC Downsview station to the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre in York region, is a good example of what greater collaboration between municipalities can achieve. This extension will help commuters and drivers move faster across the GTHA, as it is expected to add 36 million transit trips and will help clear congestion by eliminating 30 million car trips each year. This is a prime example of what we can achieve when we work together.

What I have mentioned here today are just some of the many proposed amendments outlined in this bill. The Strengthening and Improving Government Act is a bill that supports our government's goals of making Ontarians' lives easier, making our communities stronger and helping our economy to grow.

I urge all members to join me today in building a strong foundation for Ontario by supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to spend 20 minutes shortly in the leadoff, so I'll just hit a few highlights here as part of our leadoff.

Bill 85 is an omnibus bill that includes minor housekeeping amendments. As I've read through it, most of the items in there truly are housekeeping of that nature. Bill 85 affects 15 pieces of legislation, involving eight ministries.

I'm going to focus most of my speaking on a key number of pieces of this, those things that most people in my riding are talking to me about the most. The items that I will be talking about are the Highway Traffic Act, schedule 7: non-medical, non-emergency transfers. I'll also be speaking about Family Court, schedule 1—collecting money, and navigating the Family Court system—and the physician services agreement—health cuts. There's lots to talk about there.

One of the things that I'm hearing from a lot of constituents in my riding is about the non-medical, non-emergency transfers and the cost for those people and the process. Many people are being sent to some kind of an appointment. They're getting down there and they're being let go from that facility, and they're having to find their own way home, which is very, very costly.

Murray Bray, from Lion's Head, was in to see me. He was very concerned about the actual ride that he had in one of these non-medical emergency transfers. The length of the route: He felt that he was not necessarily taking the shortest route possible. He was concerned about the safety of the vehicle. He asked me very specific details about how the inspections went. Of course, I went back and checked with the county, and they do go through a very, very—from an ambulance. He thought, actually, at first that he was in an ambulance. So even there, we have to make sure that people understand whether it's an ambulance or a non-medical transfer in a private vehicle. We need to make sure we're staying on top of it.

Some of these items that I'm going to read tonight, that are going to be talked about, are very much things that I'll support. If it's cleaning up and getting rid of useless administrative stuff, we're all for that. But at the end of the day, we need substantive items to come forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts, is the kind of bill that is really challenging, because there are some parts of the bill that do help people and that should move forward; there are other parts of the bill that will do more harm than good. But all of them are this mishmash that has all been put together. They have nothing in common with one another. We go from the Highway Traffic Act to collecting on family alimony and child support payments and everything else in between. It's a bit like the kitchen sink at this point, and I have problems with that.

Like the speaker before me, I will be spending a little bit of time on section 7. I have been advocating that we need to regulate medical transportation services since I was elected, more than eight years ago. I have been asking for the regulation of that industry.

I think the Ombudsman said it the best when he said that they look like an ambulance, they feel like an ambulance, and some of them even smell like an ambulance, but they are not.

Frankly, for some of them, the wheels are falling off. For some of them, the people in the back have no knowledge or skills to be able to help the people who are strapped in there and cannot move. The whole thing is wrong.

1900

So to say that they will be able to say, "We regulated medical transportation services by putting them under the Highway Traffic Act" is a disservice to the people of Ontario and something that I will never be able to support, because it will continue to feel like this is an ambulance where the people attending to you are able to care for you when this is not the case at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for his presentation on this bill, Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. The presenter talked very specifically about many aspects of this bill and the positive impacts that it will have on not only his riding but all of Ontario, and also how it's going to affect many of his constituents.

I know my colleague from Nickel Belt and my colleague from the official opposition also spoke to it and talked specifically about part of a change that we're going to see in this bill relating to the Highway Traffic Act.

On top of that, there are many things that this bill is going to do to meet the needs of Ontarians, especially these public services that require a solid foundation to

build upon. We're taking this action through this act to strengthen and update existing legislation, as my colleague so eloquently presented earlier.

When we're talking about the changes to the Highway Traffic Act, what we're proposing to do—and I think it's important that we get this change and this proposition out there—is, we're looking to regulate the non-emergency stretcher transportation service, also known as STS vehicles, and their operators under the commercial vehicle operators registration, which is the CVOR, regime and require them to meet prescribed requirements, qualifications and standards. The government is regulating STS to protect passengers and ensure safety and quality as this sector expands. From an industry perspective, regulation will improve business certainty and create a level playing field for all STS providers.

With that, I know my time is out. I'd like once again to thank my colleague for his presentation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It's a pleasure to be here tonight, listening to the debate going on for Bill 85. I find it quite interesting that this bill is the Strengthening and Improving Government Act when in fact this bill affects so many different acts that, as the member from Nickel Belt mentioned, it doesn't make sense. I prefer omnibus bill, a second omnibus bill, the first of two that this government has pushed forward in the last month. I'm sure in the past, when they were on the opposition side, they protested vehemently against omnibus bills coming forward. Now they have taken up the task themselves.

It's quite unfortunate they've given it the greatest title: the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. If they really wanted to strengthen and improve government, they wouldn't have taken away the Ombudsman's power over Hydro One to actually tell the people of Ontario what's going on in their electricity system. We can't trust this government to bring forth any information they can rely upon when making day-to-day decisions. Businesses can't make their own investing decisions. The Ombudsman opened up the door and was able to track down a number of faults in the hydro system. One of my constituents was given a bill for \$230,000 for one month's use of electricity. Thank goodness the fear of the Ombudsman was there, because Hydro One fixed it quite quickly once they got the Ombudsman involved.

The other thing they could have added to this bill, maybe, is respect for the Financial Accountability Officer. The government created this position. They went through the process of hiring Mr. LeClair, who is more than capable of doing his job. When he comes down with a report, first, the government doesn't want to share information that he needs to make a vital decision as an officer of this Legislature; and second, when he does give them advice and clarification, they ignore it.

If they truly want to strengthen government and make an act for it, there are ways to make this happen. Unfortunately—

Mr. Bill Walker: Walk the talk.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Exactly: They're not walking the talk.

Speaker, I'm glad to be here tonight, listening to the discussion on this omnibus budget bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Scarborough Southwest for his reply.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Sudbury and the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London. I also wanted to mention earlier, at the start of this debate, what the Chair of Cabinet said, which is that we usually didn't have third reading on a bill many, many years ago. But our government is an open and transparent democracy. We're having third reading now.

I was involved in this very chamber during second reading. Many members from the opposition stood up and said, "Why are we wasting time in this Legislature with this bill? It could have gone through as regulations. The changes could have been done through regulations," which means, for those that are watching here, that it would have been done in the cabinet room and not here in the Legislature. We want to bring this forward in the form of Bill 85 just to make sure that the opposition holds us accountable and has a chance to criticize us and make changes in committee and do many other things to make this bill as good as possible.

I really appreciate the comments from the members, especially those from the opposition and plus the member from Sudbury. They're all valid comments. The member from Nickel Belt mentioned the fact of the transportation of the ambulances that are used that are private, and this is the first time we're putting some rules in place. It's very dangerous to actually have an ambulance show up with no regulations, no rules, and transport a person from one ambulance to another. I've gone through this experience myself many times in the past couple of years. It's not pleasant. I'm talking about not just the ones that are private but also the ones that are public.

I thank the Speaker for this time, and I look forward to more debate this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Before I start the lead for the opposition, I'd like to let you know, Mr. Speaker, that I'm sharing the lead with the honourable member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, followed by the MPP for Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

We're discussing, once again, Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. This bill has been debated for many hours now, and through the course of debate I think the government has heard a lot of great ideas from this side of the House about what they could do to strengthen and improve government here in the province of Ontario. But none of this is included in this bill. Instead of putting forward substantive legislation, this government has elected to put forward a very nice-sounding good-governance bill which in fact does some

very light housekeeping. Given the state of our province in Ontario right now—the state the province is in right now—I think the title of this bill is a slap in the face to the people in Ontario.

Our finance critic, Vic Fedeli, has brought to my attention a very interesting analysis by BMO of the job being done by this government as compared to our neighbour, Quebec. It highlights what the government ought to be addressing with a good-governance bill. I'm going to read an excerpt from this BMO analysis.

"Both provinces reported improved results this week versus what was expected during the spring budget season, but Ontario's came on the back of asset sales, while Quebec's came through diligent spending restraint. This week's results also highlight two other key differences. First, Quebec balanced the budget a year earlier than expected" in fiscal year 2014-15 "on a public accounts basis (i.e., before transfers to the Generations Fund for debt reduction). Ontario, however, is still grappling with a deficit of 1% of GDP and a tough spending plan to hit its target of a balanced budget" by fiscal year 2017-18. Economic growth prospects are firmer in Ontario, which should help on a relative basis, but keep in mind that real GDP growth has already been outpacing Quebec by 0.6 percentage points "per year on average for the past five years. Second, while Quebec still carries the larger debt burden, the gap has been steadily narrowing since the recession. In fact, net debt dipped as a share of GDP in Quebec last year and is on track to do so again" in fiscal year 2015-16.

1910

Mr. Speaker, the BMO analysis continues, "Ontario, however, is now expecting net debt to top 40% of GDP for the first time on record this fiscal year. As a result, the gap between net debt ratios in these two provinces is now just 9.5 percentage points, "down from about 15 percentage points "just six years ago. Against that backdrop, Quebec is in a position to begin reducing its tax burden next year—Ontario, not so much."

Again, this came from a BMO analysis comparing Ontario and Quebec and the state of the fiscal situation in both provinces.

As the report says, our net debt will be 40% of GDP. It's unbelievable for a province that was the economic engine of Canada not that long ago. We're not seeing anything from the Liberal side of the House that gives us much hope in this province.

To start with, if we're aiming for good governance, we need a competitive tax system in Ontario. That's how we can attract new investment, generate economic growth and enable job creation and innovation. It's critical to the health of our economy, and the people of this province deserve an equitable and effective tax system.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently evaluated which provincial tax system is best for small and medium-sized businesses to flourish. Sadly, it's no surprise that Ontario is actually near the bottom. We placed behind Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and British Columbia.

But despite this, in the fall economic statement last week, we heard that the government will consider even more tools for revenue growth in order to raise \$8 billion to eliminate its deficit. The government needs to come clean and tell us which taxes it will raise or new taxes it will create and what other services will be cut in order to balance the budget, because if they think the measures included in this bill warrant a name like “the good governance bill,” we’re in a lot of trouble here in the province. This government could certainly use some strengthening and improving, but this doesn’t even scratch the surface of what actually needs to be done here in the province.

As far as I can tell, many of the changes proposed in Bill 85 could have been done by regulation or put in the omnibus bill, which was time-allocated and pushed through the House. Most of what is in Bill 85 was in Bill 151, from the last session, so it’s not even new house-keeping measures that the government just happened to stumble upon. It’s all minor caretaking measures that make very, very little difference, across many acts. We could have a bill that tidies things, and that’s essentially what they’re saying, but to say it improves anything is quite a stretch.

What makes this bill really debatable is its title, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, and the way the government has been casually referring to it as a good-governance bill. It’s a good laugh and a good source of debate, but it doesn’t do nearly enough. There are many important issues we should be discussing that are the real problems here in Ontario, like the cost of hydro, which we talked about—

Hon. James J. Bradley: All day.

Mr. Monte McNaughton:—all day, as the member from St. Catharines says. It’s something that we’ve talked about for years, but of course, it keeps falling on deaf ears.

We could be talking about the new fees and taxes that this government is introducing. It would be great to discuss measures to bring down the cost of government and let people keep more of their own hard-earned money.

Bringing down the cost of living in this province would constitute, in my mind, good governance. Helping people toward the goal of home ownership, instead of hindering them, would be good governance. Giving families some tax relief and alleviating the burden imposed by income taxes, sales taxes, the estate administration tax; programs like Drive Clean, which I know the member from St. Catharines knows well; and the two dozen other taxes and fees I could name would be a start.

This government has never balanced a budget in recent memory. They try to make up for this by claiming to beat their deficit targets year after year, but quite frankly, it’s a complete shell game, a tired old trick used by governments who can’t control their own spending.

It’s no coincidence that over the last decade Ontario has experienced an historic reversal of its fortunes. Our economic growth has fallen short of the national average

every year. Our unemployment rate went above the national average for the first time in 2007 and has more or less stayed there.

We talk—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member. He has the floor.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I know that when we talk about taxes increasing, new taxes, record spending and higher unemployment than the national average for most of the time they’ve been in government, it touches a nerve, and I think that’s what I’ve done here tonight.

We talk about debt and deficit day in and day out, but it’s like it goes in one ear and out the other with this Liberal government. Instead, they tax and spend, or sell and spend, as we’ve seen with Hydro One.

As our leader, Patrick Brown, pointed out earlier today, the proceeds the government has seen from the sale of Hydro One equate to the money squandered in the gas plant scandal. If we had good governance in this province, taxpayers would have been spared that expense. Real transparency would be a great step toward good governance. Spending millions and millions of taxpayer dollars to pay teachers’ unions—we don’t know exactly what it was for—is another good example of this government falling well short of good governance and the transparency they have promised.

Cutting nurses from our health care system isn’t good governance. Making it more expensive for tradespeople to work and maintain their licence isn’t good governance. The Premier spending unprecedented time and resources out on the federal campaign trail isn’t good governance. Four police investigations most certainly are not an indicator of good governance.

Actually, this bill may in fact be as close to good governance as the Liberals, unfortunately, are likely to get, which is saying a lot, given how thin this legislation actually is.

This trend of poor governance isn’t just an academic discussion or fodder for debate. It can be seen in the everyday lives of the people of this province. To make up for lack of priorities, prudence and leadership, this government is nickel-and-diming the people of Ontario. They’re maintaining and implementing taxes and fees that allow them to take a cut of people’s bank balance when you buy a home, have a drink, fill your gas tank and even when you die. Segments of our population are paying just about the highest income taxes anywhere in Canada. In fact, with the help of the federal Liberal government, income taxes in the province of Ontario will be the second highest, just behind New Brunswick’s.

I’ll now turn it over to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has the floor.

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s a pleasure to speak to Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts—the good-governance act. This is a wide-ranging omnibus bill that affects

15 pieces of legislation across eight ministries. Most of these are housekeeping, and I do applaud and recommend that we support those, because any legislation that's not as good as it could be, we need to clean that up, and that's a good thing.

Just the name alone—good governance—my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London, Jeff Yurek, talked in his two minutes, just previous to this, about the government stripping the Ombudsman and the Auditor General of a lot of their ability to provide oversight. So when we're talking about good governance, how do you take those legislative officers out of the mix, take them away from their jobs to truly hold the government to account? It really leaves something in your mind, asking, "Why did they really do that?" What's going to happen in regard to good governance if they're going to strip these abilities from people like the Ombudsman and the Auditor General?

He also referenced the Financial Accountability Officer. Again, they hired this gentleman, Mr. LeClair; they brought him in. He's offering advice to the government, yet they kind of just push him aside and say, "Well, thanks, but we only want to hear from you when it really is what we want you to say." That's not really what it was.

I go back to a number of months ago; we actually talked in this House about Bill 8. Even there, the accountability act, they time-allocated it. How can you have good governance and good conscience talked about in this Legislature and time-allocate an accountability bill? Mr. Speaker, it's perplexing at the very minimum. It's challenging for me on every opportunity that we come to this House to speak.

I'm going to take most of my 20 minutes to talk about three different items. I'm going to talk first about the Highway Act, schedule 7: non-medical, non-emergency transfers. As I say, there are three issues, and this is the one I'm going to start with.

Firstly, I wish to talk about the regulation of medical transportation services. Specifically, I want to remind this Liberal government of the ongoing concern my constituents have with the high cost of non-emergency transfers in Ontario. I trust that many of the legislators in this House are hearing the same things. This isn't isolated to the great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, I am certain.

1920

The transfers typically run a few hundred dollars. However, I have had examples in my riding of much higher numbers, much higher costs for these transfers. For senior citizens who are using the transfers for medical appointments, dialysis or returning to the facility they came from, or home, that is a significant cost. As an example, Jean Ward of Hanover paid \$402 for a return trip from Chesley to Walkerton, which totals 25 kilometres. That works out to \$16 per kilometre.

Another constituent paid \$240. Mr. Speaker, these are not small amounts of money, particularly for people who happen to be on fixed incomes.

Another constituent was going to be charged \$300 because he weighs 300 pounds and it would take two lifts to get him onto the stretcher. This was the company's official response. We cannot discriminate on health care for those types of things.

There are approximately 300,000 such transfers in Ontario every year. Imagine the financial burden the high fees represent on our senior citizens and families who are on fixed incomes and simply cannot afford the high cost of non-emergency transfers.

As a bit of background on this contentious issue, over the years investigators have uncovered problems with staff training, infection control and vehicle safety and maintenance at private companies that provide non-urgent patient transfers.

In my two minutes earlier, I spoke about Murray Bray, who shared those very similar concerns. He was transferred from Lion's Head down to Kitchener and back. He thought they took a very long route. He actually came and asked me about specifically the inspection for the maintenance of these vehicles. So we have to make sure that we're following up on those and making sure it's the most safe option that we have out there.

The government has been in consultation since 2011 to develop standards and regulatory oversight for the non-ambulance non-urgent transportation services. Mr. Speaker, that would not be good governance, taking that long of a time for something that I believe people expect to be done much more expeditiously. That doesn't mean taking shortcuts; that means doing the job and making it a true priority when it's the safety of our constituents that is involved.

Then, in the summer of 2013, former Ombudsman André Marin released a scathing report on the lack of safety and oversight of non-emergency patient transfers. He also publicly chided the government for failing to regulate and ensure the safety of patients who use non-urgent transportation in Ontario. The former Ombudsman's criticism echoed concerns first raised by the Ontario coroner's office several years ago. So again, Mr. Speaker, this isn't an isolated one-off; this is something that has been identified by the public. It has been identified by officers of this Legislature, and yet, Mr. Speaker, we're still not seeing the action.

In response to these ongoing concerns, then-Minister of Health and MPP for London North Centre Deb Matthews pledged to regulate patient transfers by 2014. Here we are almost at the end of 2015, and yet again another broken promise. She said: "Non-urgent patient transportation has been identified as one of the priority areas for spending of the transformation fund."

If that's a priority, I'd hate to see something that's not a priority. How could you even think of not hitting that target when it's about patient safety? The same health minister also said that she had no plan to ease the financial burden—the same minister who's now in charge of poverty reduction in Ontario. For reasons unbeknownst to us, transport challenges of low-income families, fixed-income seniors and those with medical needs don't seem

to receive her attention, or at least her proper attention, which is why she refuses to assist them by funding non-urgent medical transportation in rural and remote areas.

I would like to see somebody in this Liberal government recognize the impact that the high cost of non-emergency transfer of patients has on patients and their families. I find the lack of standards and rules around the transfer fees unacceptable. I've written to the minister on this issue, and I would like to see this government address these ongoing concerns.

The second concern my constituents have with the specific schedule in the Highway Traffic Act is the lack of transport infrastructure in communities north of the GTA. This issue also remains unaddressed by this government. I introduced my private member's motion two years ago, almost: unanimous all-party support to address transportation in rural and northern Ontario, yet I have not heard one thing from the government about what they plan to do to address that issue.

With a growing senior population—the most recent census shows the population of seniors grew by 8% in tandem with incidence of low-income households—transportation services continue to be high on demand and low on supply. Demand for transportation for seniors, people with disabilities and low-income households will continue as demand for service to health care appointments and social service agencies continues.

In response to these trends, I presented to the Legislature in the fall, as I've just said, my motion to create an all-party committee to study transportation woes in rural and northern Ontario. As you may be aware, public transportation is essentially non-existent north of the GTA, yet the need for it continues to grow. Transportation is the vital link to jobs, training opportunities, medical care appointments and local support services. The government will recall that my resolution passed with unanimous consent, yet access to transportation remains one of the biggest inequities in Ontario.

I'm going to devolve a little bit here just to talk about the gas tax. For many years, my colleague Mr. Yakabuski from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has brought a motion here saying, "Let's share that across all communities." I just saw in my report that three of my municipalities receive tax. For that, I'm very thankful and very grateful, but the largest majority of those communities in my riding do not have public transit and thus do not get a cent of that tax.

We pay more on average. I can tell you what my bills for fuel are to be able to do my job. They are exorbitant because of the reality of the rural riding that I live in and the number of highway miles I have to put on, the back roads I travel. That share should be spread across every municipality in Ontario, from my perspective.

This brings us to the concern: Where's the fairness? I suggest that if this government is looking to improve, then it may want to start by ensuring transit plans apply to all Ontarians, regardless of where they live.

Finally, I wanted to comment on subsection 1(8) with regard to drugged driving. Apparently, ours is one of

only three jurisdictions in the country that have no sanctions for drug-impaired driving. This bill calls for the driver's licence to be suspended for three, seven, 30 or 90 days if the driver fails a roadside test and the police officer believes that their ability to drive is impaired.

After alcohol, cannabis is the second-most-widely used impairing drug. According to the BC Medical Journal, there is clear evidence that cannabis, like alcohol, impairs the psychomotor skills required for safe driving. Cannabis intoxication slows reaction time and impairs automated tasks, such as tracking ability and, for example, staying within a lane. A 2008 survey in that province found that 8.1% of drivers had been drinking and 10.4% tested positive for cannabis. Mr. Speaker, both of those need to come off our highways so that we all have the ability to drive as safely as possible.

Considering that the associate minister, Ms. Dipika Damerla, said that she was okay with people with medical authorization smoking pot and vaping marijuana—or did she say she was banning that? I'm not certain today. I think it's still in flux. The Premier did comment, saying she would not appreciate—but now we're coming forward as a government; now we're going back. It's that flip-flop again because they didn't do proper consultation yet again.

We should not be underestimating the possibility of a rise in the number of drivers testing positive for pot, depending on where that legislation ends up at the end of the day. The point is, we should be banning anyone who smokes pot from driving, regardless of this government's plan to legalize pot smoking.

Similar to the BC numbers, it's estimated that between 4% and 12% of motor vehicle deaths or injuries occurred under the influence of cannabis. That's too many fatalities and injuries and is a cause for concern.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Didn't we talk today about the devil's advocate being a good thing for democracy?

Family Court, schedule 1 is the next thing I want to talk about: collecting money and navigating the family system.

I continue to receive complaints from constituents about the inefficiencies involving the Family Responsibility Office and the Family Court. In fact, complaints against the provincial agency responsible for enforcing court-ordered child and spousal support payments are growing every year. Provincially, the former Ombudsman reported his office received 1,167 complaints about the Family Responsibility Office in 2014-15. That's up from 794 complaints he received two years earlier.

The Auditor General reported that outstanding arrears totalled \$1.6 billion as of 2009, and by 2014, the outstanding payments ballooned to \$3.7 billion. Just compare Ontario's sordid record of \$3.7 billion to the millions owed in Quebec, or the \$530 million owed in BC, or the \$65 million owed in Nova Scotia and the \$23 million in Newfoundland and Labrador. I think Ontario can do so much better, but I have not heard the Liberal government provide us with an update about the out-

standing \$3.7 billion. Is it flowing to the families, I ask them? Is it flowing, truly, to who needs it?

I recently reviewed a report from a volunteer group, HER Grey Bruce in my riding. It concerns the local parents' experiences who are registered to receive their child support through the Family Responsibility Office.

I think the government should listen up. Here are the results:

- 79% report that their child support is overdue;
- 54% are owed 12 months or more in overdue child support;
- 76% are supporting two children, on average, on a single family income; and
- 67% are owed \$2,000 or more in overdue child support, while 23% are owed \$20,000 or more.

These findings confirm that the Liberal government has not dealt with the delinquency, and that children involved continue to suffer. Does this government have any idea what it's been up to in the FRO office for the past 12 years? This report would suggest that they have not been doing much and certainly have not made this a priority, despite many of those children going without the things that they truly deserve and should have.

1930

At the time the minister responsible for FRO was caught in this scandal, which was two years ago, there were 60 delinquents listed on the government's Good Parents Pay website. Today, there are 53. You want to lift children out of poverty? Start collecting the court-ordered support payments owed to the children.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: I normally wouldn't respond to them saying "spending money," but you certainly have a track record of knowing how to spend—in fact, overspend. I would suggest you perhaps have an addiction to spending, and you probably are right at the top of the list of any government that has ever spent, in any place in our great world.

I'm going to now turn my thoughts to health care, something very near and dear to my heart. Almost every day that I'm in this House, I think of health care, because that's the one thing that cuts across all of us. Regardless of partisan or political stripe, regardless of whether you even think about politics, health care is that one thing that we all need the services for and that we all should be putting as the absolute priority for all of us as we set legislation in this House.

In this case, for a bill that is supposed to strengthen and improve government, Bill 85's unambitious scope is remarkable. To strengthen and improve our health care system, the Liberals need to take action to root out waste and build a more patient-centred model of health care delivery. Unfortunately, as I said in my opening remarks, they seem content, with this bill, to simply tinker around the edges and do some housekeeping.

I'm going to talk for a few moments about the physician services agreement, schedule 3, and specifically health cuts.

This section prevents legal action against representatives of the Ontario Medical Association for acts done in good faith during negotiations with the government related to physician agreements or payment.

I would suggest that the government needs to focus on patient needs. They have the money to do it. They've had record revenues. Since I came to this House in 2011, they have had record revenues every year. It's not a case of not having enough money in the system. It's how they utilize those dollars. It's about how they don't waste those dollars.

I'm not going to get into the billions and billions they've wasted on scandals like gas plants, Ornge, eHealth and those types of things. They know exactly where they have wasted those monies.

I believe if each of them looks in the mirror each morning, they have to admit that there have been billions of dollars that they have wasted as a government that did not go to the front lines of our health care system, our education system, our low-income folks, our people from Community Living and those special needs people.

I've said it in here for the last six months: Special education systems were cut in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound because of the waste and the scandal of this government.

I'm not going to debate a lot of that tonight, but at the end of the day, it has to be noted that they even have to admit they could have done a lot better job, and they should step up and take accountability for those.

As my colleague the MPP for Nipissing, Vic Fedeli, said in an earlier debate, when the Liberals took office in 2003, revenues in Ontario were just over \$66 billion. Today, revenues are \$124 billion, but sadly, expenses are \$132 billion. That addition that we were talking about earlier—overspending. You have to live—the people in my riding get it, Mr. Speaker. I trust that in your riding, they get it. If you have \$100 that you bring in, you can spend \$100. You can't spend \$105 or \$110 or \$120 and expect that that is not, at some point, going to catch up with you.

My two young sons, 18 and 21: I'm trying to teach them that you have to live within your means. If you get into that debt hole, you can talk all the wonderful flowery things you want, but who's going without? There are hospitals that are on the chopping block. There are nurses on the chopping block.

A lot of the people in community and social services are coming into my office every day—the people from mental health, every day—asking for more money.

It's sad, because this government fritters away billions on scandal, waste and mismanagement.

Sadly, I am not able to deliver all those services, Mr. Speaker, as much as I want to. I try to work with the government to provide, wherever I can, and collaborate with them. But at the end of the day, if they didn't have an \$11-billion interest payment—and they say they're going to slay this deficit. But \$11 billion, in the years I've been here—\$10 billion, and then \$11 billion—that money could have been at the front lines.

They want to talk about infrastructure? How much infrastructure could we have built if we'd had that \$11-billion interest payment, instead of paying money out the door to no good, for no benefit? Mr. Speaker, they have a spending problem, and they need to admit that.

I'd suggest they focus on patient needs, namely by putting back the \$54 million they cut from Ontario's health care budget this year; not cutting physician services by more than \$800 million; matching the approximately 900,000 people without a family doctor; putting the doctors back in the forefront, so that every person has access to a doctor; and even reversing the cut of 50 medical residency places in Ontario.

It baffles me how we have 900,000 people without a family physician, and yet this government says it can look into the crystal ball—and, by the way, many of their predictions have not been really accurate. They told us that the gas plants would be a \$40-million expenditure; I believe it ended up being \$1.1 billion. At the end of the day, forgive me if I'm a little skeptical when they give me numbers and say, "Trust me. Just trust in our good governance, and everything will be good." Considering we have 140,000 new patients entering the health care system every year, an aging population with increasingly complex needs and ongoing cuts to health, I question how this government imagines it will adequately respond to the health care needs of Ontarians.

In my current critic role, this government has pledged for two different elections that they're going to build 35,000 long-term-care beds. Yet, when I ask the question in this House, what they really come out with and say is, "We're still studying; we're working on the plan. Give us a pat on the back. We've built—or we've redeveloped—3,000." Redeveloped has nothing to do with the 30,000. It's great that they're going to redevelop some beds, but what about those people on that waiting list that has about 21,000 people currently and is projected to double?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Home care.

Mr. Bill Walker: Home care only is not going to do the job. Some people are not going to be able to stay in their home. I support home care, but at the end of the day, we need beds for those with acute needs who need the proper care they are going to get there.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from Mississippi Mills. In summary, there is little in this bill about strengthening and improving governance, as the title of Bill 85 suggests. It's a lot of tinkering and a lot of tweaking on the edges, but it's not going to drastically change. It's not a representation of what the people of Ontario are asking for.

With everything going on in Ontario today—the fire sale of Hydro One, the continued OPP investigation into the Liberals' gas plant scandal, the Ornge ambulance financial scandal, the ongoing bribery saga of the Liberals' Sudbury by-election scandal and the head of our treasury's announcement to the world on W5 that "We're out of money"—the government party has sucked the oxygen out of this province.

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm hearing catcalls over there about me not being positive. I am one of the most positive people you're ever going to meet, but at the end of the day, this government doesn't give me lots to stand up and cheer and high-five about. The people in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound are not coming into my office giving me high-fives for the programs and services they're not getting.

I'd love to be able to stand here and high-five every single person over there, if they would just step back, listen and take into stock that they are not doing the job they could. We could work with them. We could do a lot of things collaboratively to make this a better province. I don't see them tabling any bills that are going to stop any of this. It's a lot more tweaking, and not enough action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is a pleasure to rise in the Legislature and continue to speak to Bill 85, entitled the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

As many of my colleagues have previously stated, the nature of the proposed bill is rather conventional and pertains to numerous housecleaning items to be updated, which span across eight different ministries and 15 pieces of legislation. Further, some of the suggested legislative changes stem from requests made by the cities of Brantford, Hamilton and Toronto regarding outdated articles in legislation that are no longer pertinent and need to be duly updated.

Following our party's tone regarding working together and supporting legislation to help the people of Ontario, I will be supporting this motion.

While this bill is fairly uncontroversial, I feel it represents a missed opportunity by the government to address further substantive measures in a number of ways and in a number of areas. For example, the proposed change to the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act is a worthwhile measure and should be enacted. As stated in the bill, the proposed change seeks to provide immunity for representatives of the Ontario Medical Association from potential legal action during good-faith negotiations with the government related to physician agreements or payments.

1940

I feel this underscores the issue at hand, as the government should instead prioritize and address the current negotiations with the OMA and act in a good-faith manner instead of imposing contracts as well as cutting residency positions. For example, in Ottawa two dermatology residency students left the province rather than open a practice here, which is an unfortunate outcome when wait times are already far too long.

Recently, I was in Ottawa with our leader and the member from Nepean-Carleton speaking to about 12 or 14 doctors at the Queensway Carleton Hospital about the dilemma that they are in. The government is cutting fees for services to doctors two different times this year, for a total of 7% cuts to the fees for doctors. This is having a very negative effect on the doctors' financial viability,

their ability to run their businesses, run their offices and pay their staff. It will most likely continue into next year and the year after that because we have a big-spending government that has a money-shortage problem. Everything we see here at Queen's Park revolves around the lack of will to reduce spending and the reality that they're running out of money and so they must cut services to groups that they can do it to: in other words, groups that aren't well-organized and large and groups that are vulnerable.

These doctors were telling us distressing stories. They were intelligent, bright, young doctors sitting in the room, specialists in various fields. One doctor ran a family health clinic. He was telling us a story of a young woman who is in medical school. She works at his clinic and is very good. They were hoping to have her join them next July when she graduates from medical school. She is \$250,000 in debt from going to school for the many years that it takes to become a doctor. In recent months, the doctor has said there will be a limit on how many young doctors can go to health clinics, so she will not be permitted to go and work in this family health team in Ottawa. It's a job that she wanted to do, that she likes and that she's good at. It's a place that appreciates her work and needs her help, and it's not going to happen. But her debt will not go away, and the service that she could provide will not be delivered. The 800,000 people in Ontario who do not have a family physician will continue to be without that person as a physician. This is happening all across the province with many doctors. Instead of increasing the number of doctors that we need, we're reducing them. All of this is to address the fact that they've spent too much money. They have to cut costs, and here we are cutting services in health care in so many different areas.

The number of new patients in Ontario is expected to grow by 140,000 people every year as the population grows and ages. This represents a critical juncture for health care in our province, especially with the cuts to doctors. Doctors have had their wages cut by 7%.

Hospitals: Although they're getting increases, the increases are less. The financial funding to them does not keep up with their increased costs so they have shortfalls. They have no choice but to commit layoffs. Nurses are being laid off along with PSWs and custodial staff, and even beds are being closed in hospitals around the province. Again, we expect this to increase next year and the year after that because this government is not showing any intention of slowing their spending habits. They definitely have a money shortage, and this is one of the ways they're dealing with it.

Another thing that's going to happen now is that we expect 25,000 Syrian refugees in Canada very shortly, in the next couple of months. We all welcome these people. We want to help them, but we have to be prepared to help them. I don't know how we're going to be able to do that when these people are going to come here with needs.

There are injuries from war, whether it's legs or arms that are missing because of shootings and explosions; the

terrible diseases and illnesses they've picked up in refugee camps over the last year or two or three, depending on how long ago they had to leave their homes and live in camps; not to mention the mental health problems, which we're told could be the greatest health problems of all, from everything they've seen and that they've endured—the killing, the shooting, the fighting and losing family members. So these people would most likely truly have PTSD, in some cases, which is a terrible mental health disease.

Are we going to be able to offer these people the kind of care they need so they can adjust into Canadian society and eventually become productive, healthy citizens? I would suggest that perhaps not, which would be a very sad thing when the intention of the Canadian people is that we do a good humanitarian job. We jeopardize that because we have a government that has frittered away our financial ability to help those that need help.

Regarding the issue of red tape and overregulation in the province of Ontario: The decisions by this government have made the situation much worse and have tarnished our reputation as a place for investment and economic opportunities for business. Again, we have the big spending that goes on. We have the Green Energy Act, which will take as much as \$100 billion out of our economy over the next 20 years in the form of subsidies for solar and wind power at a time when we don't need that electricity. We have all of the nuclear, gas, and hydroelectricity that we need; in fact, we're producing too much. We're spending that kind of money on wind and solar, yet we have to back it up with gas or nuclear.

We need only to quote Ed Clark, the government's very own business adviser on economic growth, regarding his concerns about the 380,000 regulatory requirements faced in Ontario: "While the number is staggering, the structure and complexity of compliance is even more problematic. It makes us less competitive. We are seen by foreigners—and even ourselves—as a slow" and unfriendly "place to do business."

Here, I want to tell you a story, Mr. Speaker, about a man I know named Mark Tijssen. This is an example of red tape and wrongful enforcement by government. Mark Tijssen purchased—he likes to buy animals like pigs, cattle and ducks and take them home to his property and slaughter them, and put them in his freezer for his own consumption. This story happened about three years ago. He bought a pig, brought it home—he bought the pig from a farmer—slaughtered the pig on his property, which is a rural three-acre property, and put it in his freezer to feed his family. He shared it with a friend. Now, technically, this is against the law because it wasn't an inspected pig, but it was for his own consumption. His neighbour drove her pork chops down the street, and she was charged with the crime of not having properly inspected slaughtered pork. The MNR seized the pork from this lady and charged Mark Tijssen with the crime of running an illegal slaughterhouse. He spent two years fighting the MNR for his right to eat the food he chooses. He won, eventually, because they imposed upon his con-

stitutional rights. They had MNR inspectors at night sitting in a tree stand beside his home, taking photographs of him and his family as they lived and played and ate in their home. This was a constitutional infraction because it was unreasonable search and seizure of his home.

It was thrown out of court after two years, but there was no justice for Mark; he went through hell for two years and lost a lot of time off at work. That is an unnecessary thing in this country. It happens here every day, and your government does it.

He concluded by stating—Mr. Clark went on to further say, “Governments are going to regulate things. That is their job. But they must—as in other things they do—try to” do a better job of regulating. “If they can do that they can become a source of competitive advantage.” He concluded by stating that “it’s time to look at regulation in a very different way—let’s take an outcome-based approach. In other words, what is the outcome we want, and what is the lowest-cost way of achieving it?”

I can attest to this sentiment in my role as critic for natural resources and forestry and the enormous burden placed on a myriad of companies with overregulation and excessive red tape, such as happened to Mark Tijssen, who killed a pig and spent two years in court—and the charges were withdrawn.

1950

There are two other people that I’d just like to briefly talk to you about who endured MNR and conservation authority enforcement, to the detriment of their private businesses.

Boris Horodysky is the largest onion grower in Ontario, in Canada. He grows onions on the Holland Marsh. He had to control water from a ditch so that it wouldn’t flood his fields. He built a dam to keep the water back from the creek, but he didn’t have a permit from the conservation authority. They laid charges against him and Boris said no, he would not remove the dike. He spent money in court. He fought them for a year and he did win. All he was trying to do was to carry on the business of running his farm.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, while I support this motion and will be voting in favour of it, I hope that the government will address the concerns that I and many of my fellow colleagues have raised during the debate around this bill and will implement the suggestions going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again, I’m pleased to join in the debate. Many people have spoken about the name of the bill. The bill is entitled Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, and it talks about good governance. While there are certain amendments in this bill which were necessary, and I agree that they are simply housekeeping, to call this bill the Strengthening and Improving Government Act is a little overreaching. There are a number of minor changes in this bill, but they aren’t

significant changes that actually strengthen the government.

In fact, things that would have strengthened the government or improved good governance would have been ensuring that there was strong oversight in the various sectors that were amended, whether it’s health care and ensuring we have strong oversight, which this government does not support. Time and time again they’re weakening the oversight, they’re weakening the role of the Ombudsman.

In fact, for the first time in the history of Ontario, all of the major legislative officers wrote a joint letter calling on this government to strengthen the government, to improve the government, to ensure there’s accountability by including oversight over Hydro One, but they removed that. So contrary to this bill, contrary to the title, Strengthening and Improving Government Act, they have weakened and reduced the oversight. That’s a major concern.

With respect to other areas where this bill touches on topics but doesn’t go far enough, there is a major concern with the existence of temporary job agencies in this province. In fact, under this government, from 2002 to 2012, we’ve seen a 72% increase in the sector’s earnings. I’m quoting Sara Mojtahedzadeh. She published an article on May 10, 2015, and she writes: “The province’s employment services sector earned \$5.7 billion in revenue in 2012, a near 72% jump from 2002. Temporary agencies account for an estimated 60% of that industry’s total revenue.” So under this government, a decade of Liberal rule has resulted in a 72% increase in a sector which is clearly exploiting the workers of this province. Precarious employment is a significant issue.

I also want to clearly indicate that I’m going to be sharing my time with the member from Nickel Belt to ensure that that member gets her opportunity to share the very important concerns of Nickel Belt.

As I was saying, this Liberal government is responsible for a significant, a massive jump in revenue for temporary job agencies. They’ve grown under this government. Temporary job agencies are a scourge on many people who are struggling to get permanent employment or struggling with the fact that they only have precarious employment, that they can only find temporary jobs. They’re cycled again and again. Even though there’s allegedly protection so that they don’t have to continue down this route, what happens in reality is that people are working in temporary jobs for multiple years, for sometimes five years. If the government would have taken this opportunity to strengthen the employment law, to strengthen the employment law, to strengthen the labour act, to ensure that people don’t have to rely on simply precarious or temporary work, that would have been significant to strengthen and improve this government bill. But the government didn’t do that.

The government didn’t take a stance. In fact, under this government, we have seen a continuing reduction in good jobs. We’ve seen an erosion of the permanent job force. We’ve seen a staggering increase in temporary em-

ployment, and it's directly the fault of this government and this government's policies.

There are a number of other areas where the government could have amended this omnibus bill. It amends seven schedules—as the member from Nickel Belt mentioned, a wide variety of sectors ranging from ambulance services to Family Court services to everything in between.

In that wide, omnibus changing of laws, the government should have included something to address the ongoing concern around auto insurance. In this province we pay the highest auto insurance rates in the country. The government has promised to reduce these rates, but time and time again we've seen the government prioritize the needs of insurance companies and their profits and put the priorities of people far below. They've put insurance companies ahead of the average consumer and the average driver. The issue here is an issue of fairness. It's unfair to create a condition where you have to purchase auto insurance—it's the law—but it's not the law under this Liberal government to ensure that it's affordable. If you make a law to make something mandatory, you certainly have the responsibility to ensure that it's affordable. This government is failing in that responsibility time and time again.

It's simply unacceptable that in this province we're paying such high rates and at the same time we're seeing continual cuts to our benefits. Our benefits are being stripped time and time again. We are receiving less coverage, which is putting people in an even worse position. Those who are injured and those who are seriously injured are not receiving the coverage they need, and we're seeing an increase in insurance profits; we're not seeing a reduction in premiums. In all areas, it's a completely unfair scenario made even worse by this government's policies.

Again, to strengthen and improve the government, the government could have taken steps to ensure that we have better regulation of rates to ensure that people are going to see a reduction in their rates and there's more fairness in the system, but the government did not do that. They failed again to follow through on the promise they made to reduce insurance rates by 15%. They've broken that promise, and there's nothing in this bill to address that very serious concern. People are struggling in this province, and the government has done nothing to address that.

In addition, beyond auto insurance, we have another area where this government could have addressed and they've failed to consider. They've addressed seven various schedules and seven various sectors. They didn't address another major concern, which is home insurance. Home insurance is something that is optional, but here is a little caveat: Most mortgages require home insurance. Mortgages and the financial sector are regulated through the federal government. In effect, if mortgages require home insurance and we want to ensure that people have the opportunity to buy a home, this government needs to play a role in ensuring that home insurance is also regu-

lated. They have not done that, and we're seeing home insurance rates increase year over year. It's simply putting people in a more difficult position. That's another area that needs to be addressed, and this government has failed to address increasing home insurance. Again, it's another issue of fairness. If you have an unregulated industry and you need to get home insurance to get a mortgage and there is no protection by this government, people are going to be put in more and more difficult circumstances. This government has failed to stand up for the people of Ontario.

There are a number of areas where the government could have actually strengthened and improved the circumstances for the people of Ontario, but the government has failed.

There are indeed some major concerns with the stretchier transportation services. That, I'm going to leave to the very, very capable hands, I'm sure, of our health critic and our member from Nickel Belt.

2000

In closing, I want to touch on the changes that were addressed in the Courts of Justice Act looking at the Civil Marriage Act and some amendments there. This could have been an opportunity to address the very serious concerns people are facing around the Family Court system here in this province. It cries out for some amendments; it cries out for changes. There are significant problems that people are facing in this province when it comes to access to court, when it comes to settlements, when it comes to navigating the system. That's an area that the government has not acted on and we need to see more action on. I appreciate the support I'm receiving from one of the members across.

In addition, an ongoing concern with the justice system, broadly speaking, is that we need to ensure that if we want to really hold up the rule of law, people need access to legal representation, and that requires a robust investment in legal aid. That's an area that the government has made some advancements in, but I call on the government to continue to support legal aid to ensure that in a country that is based on the rule of law, the access that individuals have to the justice system literally connects to their ability to navigate in this world. The more difficult it is to access those services, the more difficult it is for people to actually navigate in this society. So we need to ensure that there is fairness in that area as well.

Those are the areas I'd like to talk on today. I thank you for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker, and I will now pass off the time to the member from Nickel Belt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt has the floor.

M^{me} France Gélinas: As I mentioned earlier on in the evening, this bill is actually a series of laws that are being amended. You have to realize, Speaker—and you know that—that when we want to make changes to a law, you can only do this when the law is up for debate. Well, with Bill 85, there are seven different pieces of legislation that are up for debate. So when you see a title such as An Act to strengthen and improve government, you figure,

"Wow, this is something pretty good. I hope we can go somewhere with this."

The first one is on the Ministry of the Attorney General, and my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has talked about some of the schedules in there that should have found themselves into that particular piece of legislation but actually never did.

The next one is on the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. Again, what a golden opportunity to look at insurance rates when you're talking about the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. But no, this opportunity was not acted upon. All we had were a few housekeeping items.

Schedule 3 is on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and, more specifically, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004. To tell you, Speaker, that there is a pent-up demand to make amendments to that piece of legislation is saying it mildly. Did you know that the last time—actually, it was during health estimates that Cancer Care Ontario came. And here it was, in black and white, for everybody to see—it was the first time I saw that, anyway—that more of the preventive colonoscopies that are done under the auspices of Cancer Care Ontario are done in private clinics than in hospitals. We have now passed the 50% mark.

When you talk about a commitment to the future of medicare, ask anybody in this Legislative Assembly; ask anybody in this province; ask anybody in Canada what medicare means: Medicare means that you receive care based on your needs, not on your ability to pay. But when you see a system where now more than half of it is being provided by for-profit private clinics rather than our hospitals, I start to worry.

When I look at all the programs and services that used to be provided in our not-for-profit hospitals that are now being pushed into the community—don't get me wrong; I have no problem with care being provided in the community if it is provided by competent providers and it is provided in a way that is not for profit, where the good of the patient is what drives this. But, no, that's not what is happening at all.

We have a government that says to hospitals that haven't seen a budget increase in the last five years to eight years, depending on the size of this and the kind of programs that you offer, "You have to manage within a flat-line budget." Well, none of the expenses in a hospital stays the same. Can you imagine? Has your hydro bill gone up lately, Speaker? Well, the hospital hydro bill has also gone up. Every year, the cost of drugs goes up by at least 10%. So all of their expenses keep going up, but their budgets have stayed the same. Their budgets have stayed the same for the last five years.

What does that mean? Well, the government tells them, "The law is the law: You have to put forward a balanced budget." So they're stuck having to put forward a balanced budget. The government tells them, "If it is not acute hospital care, don't provide it anymore; send it to the community." So what are hospitals doing? Basically, everything that is not acute hospital care gets download-

ed to the community, whether you're talking about surgery, you're talking about physiotherapy, you're talking about cataract surgery, you're talking about anything that is not acute hospital care—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Breast screening; colonoscopy.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Breast screening; colonoscopy. All of this—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Dialysis.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Dialysis. All of this is being sent to the community—so far, so good—but to the private sector in the community, and this is where things go wrong.

Everybody will remember our good Auditor General—I have the French version here, so I cannot tell you the page because they change, English to French. But the Auditor General looked at what happened to our home care system when Mike Harris, when he was the leader of our province, the Premier of Ontario, had this bright idea that the private sector was able to deliver better, faster and cheaper than the not-for-profit. So we had a fairly robust home care system in Ontario, and then he opened it up to the private sector. When the private sector saw this, they came by the dozen. They saw an opportunity to make money. Agencies like the VON—the VON in Sudbury went bankrupt. They had had the home care contract in our community for decades, if not 100 years. All of a sudden this multinational came and put a proposal in place that, frankly, Speaker, looked like they had cloned Mother Teresa. The care was going to be so good and so patient-focused. It was going to be great, and they were going to do that better, cheaper, faster—

Ms. Cindy Forster: They never even had a nurse on staff.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —and they never even had a nurse on staff; they never even had a single provider on staff.

The proof is there, Speaker. Our home care system is broken; it fails more people than it helps. Why? In big part, because we have privatized. We now have different private home care providers that compete against one another for those home care contracts. This is not how you bring forward best practices. Best practices is, when you learn something in health care, you share it with the rest of them so that we can all learn together and all provide better care together. Well, that's not what is happening, because when a for-profit company has found an advantage in better care, they use it as a competitive advantage to win more contracts. How uncaring does that sound? There's nothing in there to help the patient, but this is what we see.

A commitment to the future of medicare? The first thing they should have put in there is to make sure we will end the privatization of our health care system; we will make sure that our health care system is delivering—public money, delivered for the public good, through not-for-profit. So when the Auditor General tells us that a full 5% of the \$2.7 billion that goes to home care goes to profit—I happen to be strong in math, Speaker—those are hundreds of millions of dollars that go to profit. Do

you know how many hours of PSW at 16 bucks an hour you can buy with \$1 million? That would go a long way toward fixing our system—but none of this.

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So we have this golden opportunity. The Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act is open. We can really show that we are committed to medicare; we are committed to not-for-profit care based on needs, not on ability to pay. But none of that is in that bill. Those are opportunities lost.

I see that the time is just flying by. I will go to the section that is a constant irritant in my side. This is schedule 7, on the Ministry of Transportation. If somebody would have told me eight years ago when I wanted patient transport regulated that I was going to be standing out here eight years later, when people have died, wheels have fallen off, flat tires have happened on the way to a call, where people have been stranded on the side of the highway because this ambulance thing broke down on Highway 144, they got eaten alive by bugs because it was June and the windows didn't work and the patient was covered in bug bites by the time he got to Timmins hospital—if they were going to tell me that, eight years later, the only thing that was going to be regulated was—listen to this—“As a result of these amendments, medical transportation services may be regulated under the general provisions that regulate commercial motor vehicles.”

Really? We waited eight years for that? How could that be? We all know that after the hospital restructuring we had lots of changes within our hospitals. With all of the changes that have happened to our small and rural hospitals, they are on the verge of self-imploding. They can't do deliveries anymore, because if you don't do at least 50 cases of obstetrics a year, apparently you're not safe in doing this. They can't do hip surgeries anymore because if you don't do at least so many hip surgeries, it will cost more to do the hip surgery in Dryden than at UHN, which does 1,000 of them a week, so let's send everybody—what are we saying? We are saying that we are not going to provide hospital care in our small and rural hospitals anymore. Instead, we will transport people to bigger centres, where centres of excellence are going to be able to do things better, cheaper and faster.

There's a theme to this, isn't there: “better, cheaper, faster”? What does that mean? Sure, the centres of excellence get really good: If you do 1,000 knee replacements a month, you get very good at doing knee replacements. If you happen to live on University Avenue, bonus; things are good. But if you happen to live in Nickel Belt, that means a four-hour ride during the good season; make that a four-and-a-half or five hours' ride to get down here in the bad season, or, depending on where you live in Nickel Belt, it's seven-and-a-half-hour drive one way to get to Toronto. The price to pay for those centres of excellence is that everybody has to travel.

For a lot of those people, that means we will be calling those—yes—privatized, for-profit patient transportation because we don't use ambulances anymore, because you see, when you use an ambulance, the people driving and

the people sitting in the back have training. They know exactly what to do in case of an emergency. In the back of an ambulance you have similar to an intensive care unit: You have oxygen available, you have a list of medications available to you, and you have people that are trained and know how to use that equipment.

We don't use ambulances; we use those private, for-profit patient transportation services that look, feel and smell like an ambulance, but they are not. They will be a private ambulance operator who will be really happy to show you his brand new truck—it's really an old truck with a new paint job that has a box in back; the person sitting beside you was supposed to be his neighbour who used to be a PSW, but she was busy that day so it was the daughter of the neighbour, who hasn't got as much as a—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Has no training.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Has no training whatsoever; couldn't perform CPR if your life depended on it; certainly could not administer first aid because she has no clue what “first aid” means. There could be a few pieces of equipment hanging around in the back of this thing, but she has no idea what they're for.

You see, Speaker, all we do is regulate commercial motor vehicles. We don't do anything about who will be driving this and who will be sitting in the back with you. But make no mistake: When they bring you in there, they strap you in. You are strapped in there. You cannot help yourself. Both of your hands are secure in there under layers of blankets and under layers of straps, so you cannot help yourself. You depend on this person, who you think has the knowledge and skills to help you, but you're wrong. The person who sits there could be anybody, and frankly is just about anybody.

This is why everybody wants this industry to be regulated. Don't only send it for a checkup so that we see how the tread marks are in the tires. Sure, I don't want a flat tire, but that's not enough. I want way more than this. I want to make sure that they have training. I want to make sure that they have quality protocol. I want to make sure that they have a base hospital so that if things go sour in the back of that ambulance, they have somebody out there at the hospital who will help them and guide them. But none of that exists. None of that exists.

They will say, “Oh, it is good to regulate the medical transportation service,” but that's not what they're doing, Speaker. All they're saying is that the vehicle will have to undergo inspection. We don't know how often. We don't know exactly what will be inspected. We know very little. All it says is, “As a result of these amendments, medical transportation services may be regulated under the general provisions that regulate commercial motor vehicles”—“may be” and “under the general provisions.” That's not warm and fuzzy to me, Speaker; not at all. That makes me very, very worried.

Why is it that when we have an opportunity to do change, when we have an opportunity to do good, when we have an Ombudsman's report that cries for action, when we have a government—and members of the Liberals, one after another, say how important it is to regu-

late this industry, and then we come with this watered-down affair, when really, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act is in that same bill.

This bill is open. It was quite easy to bring some regulations that had to do with the quality of care that is provided in medical transportation. Don't get me wrong; I would much rather that we did not have private operators of medical transportation services. I wish that we had in place a system where, when you call an ambulance, it's actually an ambulance that shows up, that you can trust, that not only do the EMS people who stand at the back have a college education, but that they have continuing education, they have certification, they have the supports in place. None of that is there—what an opportunity lost.

How many more people will have to die in the back of those before they say, “Oh, maybe checking the thickness of the tread on the tire was not sufficient to ensure quality. Maybe we should have regulated the people who actually deliver the care”? Really, Speaker? Eight years later we could not find the time to regulate this, when we have a bill in front of us, when we have the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act that is in that specific bill that would allow us to regulate? None of that is there.

To say that I am disappointed—it's beyond me. I'm disappointed and I'm worried. I'm worried because like everything else in our health care system, more and more of it gets privatized. More and more of it is provided by private, for-profit. If those patient service transportation services fight amongst one another to get those contracts, that's because there's money to be made. If there wasn't money to be made, they would not fight to get those contracts. So I'm worried that our precious health care dollars are going to basically make profit where there shouldn't be, make profit where this money really is taken out of our health care system where it could provide care, where it could do some good.

I am conscious that we had made an agreement between all three parties that we would limit our notes on this particular bill to 40 minutes per caucus, and I see that I only have a few seconds.

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J'aimerais, avant de conclure, vraiment exprimer mon désappointement par rapport à ce projet de loi. C'est un projet de loi qui ouvrirait sept lois différentes qui existent en Ontario; entre autres, une vis-à-vis le système de santé qui nous aurait permis de nous assurer que le système de transport des patients, qui est maintenant de plus en plus privatisé et donné au privé—on avait l'opportunité d'y mettre des règlements.

En ce moment, on a amené des règlements sur une très petite partie, la partie qui regarde que le véhicule lui-même est en état d'être sur la route, mais c'est tout. On ne parle pas de la qualité des soins aux patients et on ne parle pas de la formation des gens qui se trouvent dans ces véhicules-là avec nous. Ça, c'est vraiment une opportunité perdue.

Comme mon collègue de Bramalea-Gore-Malton avait dit avant moi, il y avait plusieurs opportunités pour

le gouvernement d'amener des changements, parce que les projets de loi sont ouverts, tant au niveau de l'assurance pour les voitures, de l'assurance pour la maison et pour les règlements pour le système de transport des patients. Rien de ça n'a été fait. C'est un vrai désappointement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak for a few moments on this bill, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

But I have to say, speaking of good government, that I should tell this House that the election in Newfoundland is an example of the return of good government. The latest count: Liberals, 30 seats; PCs, eight seats; NDP, two seats. We expect the new Premier, Dwight Ball, to carry forth on his pledges of bringing and returning good government to the province of Newfoundland, just as the Wynne government is bringing good government to the province of Ontario in the face of this legislation.

This good-government legislation contemplates, really, four areas: amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, amendments to the Family Law Act, amendments to the Courts of Justice Act and amendments to the City of Toronto Act.

Every few years, governments have to comb through the legislation that's on the books. There are always ways to improve and to refine legislation that has already been in existence. That's what good government does: It sits back, it looks at the legislation on the books, and it thinks carefully and constructively about how it might improve that legislation. Why does it do that? It does not do that for partisan purposes; it does that because it's the right thing to do. The people of Ontario expect their governments to be vigilant and to always be looking at the legislation on the books to see if there are better ways of conducting government business. That's what the new Premier of Newfoundland, Dwight Ball, will be doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments? One of the New Democrats can respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, Bill 85 has a part in it that I spent most of my time talking about. Basically, we know that patient transportation services need to be regulated. More than four years ago, the Minister of Health at the time said that she had the intention “to set quality and safety standards” for stretcher transportation services. At the time, the minister went on to say, “At the earliest opportunity,” my “government plans to introduce legislation that would, if passed, regulate the industry by setting core standards and requirements on transporting passengers between health care facilities in non-emergency situations.”

Over four years have passed since the Minister of Health spoke those words, and we still have no regulation; we still have no standard. Schedule 7 falls far short of setting real standards for stretcher transportation services. There is no quality assurance, there are no limits and there is no complaint mechanism. There is nothing that gives the family confidence that proper care will be provided.

I don't understand how an industry such as patient transportation can go unregulated for such a long period of time after the same government that is there, the Liberal government, has shown that it needs to be regulated, has said that at the first opportunity they are going to do this, and yet, after speaking those words over and over, four years later there is still nothing done. What a shame, Speaker. What a shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Again I inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip, asking that this vote be deferred until tomorrow during the time for deferred votes. This is pursuant to standing order 28(h).

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bradley has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2027.

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Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
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McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	

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Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa–Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke–Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London–Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York–Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga–Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener–Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley–Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Whitby–Oshawa	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonnell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
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Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 30 November 2015 / Lundi 30 novembre 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2015, Bill 85, Mme Meilleur / Loi de 2015 sur le renforcement et l'amélioration de la gestion publique, projet de loi 85, Mme Meilleur	
Hon. James J. Bradley	6849
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6849
Mr. Bill Walker.....	6850
Mme France Gélinas.....	6851
Mr. Glenn Thibeault	6851
Mr. Jeff Yurek	6851
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6852
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	6852
Mr. Bill Walker.....	6853
Mr. Jack MacLaren.....	6857
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	6859
Mme France Gélinas.....	6860
Hon. David Zimmer.....	6863
Mme France Gélinas.....	6863
Third reading vote deferred	6864

